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Images of Islam : a study of the differences between Islamic and Victorian conceptions of certain Muslim practices and beliefs.

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IMAGES OF ISLAM:
A Study Of The Differences
Between Islamic And Victorian Conceptions Of
Certain Muslim Practices And Beliefs.

Submitted
For The Award Of The Degree Of
Doctor Of Philosophy

By
Shaheen Kuli Khan Khattak

King's College
University Of London.

1999



ABSTRACT

This thesis is based on a survey of nineteenth century English literature with particular emphasis on the period 1840-1900. The focus is both on the representation of Islam and of Muslims as depicted by writers of Victorian literature in general and on certain relevant cultural aspects. The thesis involves a comparative study of the conceptions of Islam and Muslims found in Victorian literature, which are then compared to those accepted in Islam. To substantiate the ideas found in Victorian literature, research into the cultural climate of the age has also been conducted. This has taken in certain aspects of art, music and theatre which were of importance in themselves in forming attitudes and which provided popular entertainment at the time. A comparison has been made between depiction and reality, in order to discover the refractive index which certain concepts underwent, when they moved from one medium into another. The mediums involved were not only the language or culture but the people under scrutiny and their observers. These discussed societies were largely found in the Muslim part of the British Empire. This thesis makes an effort to go beyond the misconceptions of Islam and the Muslims, and attempts to establish or challenge the validity of the ideas about Islam prevalent in these observations.

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Dedicated To The Memory Of My Father

Habibullah Khan Khattak

The Profound And Munificent Academic.

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CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

In the development of English literature it is only recently that writers have begun to take a serious and dispassionate study of Islam. Whether the originator of this approach was the Papal Bull, Thomas Carlyle, Norman Daniel or Edward Said is not in itself the subject under discussion here. To say this is not to denigrate their efforts but on the contrary to objectively study their contribution to intellectual debate. The continuous marginalisation of the issues raised by them contributes to ignorance, as the indigenous Islamic voice has mostly been ignored and has rarely expressed itself in this discussion. The lack of understanding or of an objective appreciation of the Islamic ethos, has in fact focused attention on contentious issues alone. These ideas need to be studied in greater proximity as they elaborate the background against which nineteenth century English literature was formulated. This process will require a detailed study on both sides of the divide in order to make a positive contribution to knowledge.

The impetus for research in this field was provided by Byron Porter Smith's Islam in English Literature, originally a Ph.D. thesis submitted to the Department of English at Columbia University in 1939 and later published as a book. This was a study which placed ideas about Muhammad and Islam against their western intellectual background. Smith's effort was pre-empted in 1937 by

another book, The Crescent and the Cross by Samuel C. Chew. However Smith was able to make adjustments in the text which avoided repetition of material which had been surveyed in Chew's book. Since Chew had made a detailed study of certain important aspects of Muslim civilisation in English literature of the Medieval and Renaissance period, Smith concentrated on a later period, with an intensive study of Thomas Carlyle's lecture on 'The Prophet as Hero' of 1840. Smith's method of writing was to commence each chapter with a short political history of the period, and then follow it with a study of the writings of English authors, and of Latin as well as European translations.

Thirty years later the material studied in these books was resonated by Norman Daniel in his book Islam and the West (1960) which is another authoritative exposé of the distortion of Islam in western literature. This book has had a recent revival and a paperback edition was published in 1997. Daniel was conscious of and sympathetic to the feelings of the Muslims as he had lived with them. He apologised to them for the scandalous material and unpleasant libels of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad, noting that western literature abounded in such fabricated details. As a result of the closer and more literary contact between the two worlds of east and west he premised a scientific inquiry.¹ This inquiry would establish factual evidence in order to determine what was implied by the ignorance and unpleasantness of men towards their enemies, and by the hostile view of Islam expressed by chroniclers and others through the ages. Daniel limited his inquiry to the period from the twelfth to the fourteenth

centuries. His study was focused on Christian traditions about Islam which were already in existence at the time. The study of the development of these traditions and their meaning formed a new body of opinion.² Daniel wanted to delineate the deformed image of Islam which was established in the conscious European mind. It proved to be a detailed study of how the misrepresentations about Islam arose and of how they were allowed to develop from the earliest of times. He also traced the western sources for most of the erroneous ideas manifested.

He followed this study with another book Heroes and Saracens, which begins in the Merovingian times and goes on to the age of the Crusades. In this book Daniel provides abundant material and insights concerning the collection of material regarding Islam and the portrayal of Muslims in unofficial western sources. He particularly concentrates on the Chansons de geste and the romances that developed from them. The Chansons were in three forms of Old French and had a European influence throughout the Middle Ages on Italian, German, Spanish and English literature. Daniel presumed that what was said about the Saracen's religion in the songs related to actual facts in the same way that a distorting mirror twists a real object into an unrecognisable travesty. Daniel compares these songs with the official polemic, and with the legendary and libellous origins from which it developed. In his study he concentrates on the false ideas regarding Islam which existed in the minds of the poets and not on their literary skill. Similarly he is concerned with the content of a convention used

¹Norman Daniel, foreword Islam and the West: The Making of an Image (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1960) 5. Henceforth Islam and the West.

²Daniel, Islam and the West 6.

over a long period and only slightly modified. One such convention was the false idea of Islam as an idolatry, originally found in the Chansons and then rediscovered by the west in the last century when these poems were republished.³ Daniel discovered that these largely homogenous conventions were the fossils of a lengthy evolution. According to him the sociocritique which was introduced in the last century had been dormant for some time and could be effectively used in his study. Daniel decided to relate the content and form of a work of literature to major social changes that had taken place at the time.⁴ Following this method he studied how the Chansons represented Islam and the Arabs to the public of that time. He discussed the term "Saracen" as used by the poets and selected the name Mahon to represent the false god. The reason he gave for this circumspection was that according to him it was the term least like the name of the Prophet and would not give offence or pain to the believers of Islam. Daniel also decided to limit the use of material hostile to the Prophet Muhammad. He ignored polemic that totally denied Muhammad's Prophethood and focused on those works which at least assume, that he put forward a claim to be a prophet.⁵ Daniel classified the people who wrote about Islam into three categories the first being the polemicists or the formal theologians whose objective was to convert people through actual debates and the last being the poets whose purpose was to amuse. In between these two categories were the indeterminate class consisting mostly of chroniclers

³Norman Daniel, Heroes and Saracens (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1984) 4. Henceforth Saracens.

⁴Daniel, Saracens 5.

⁵Daniel, Saracens 10.

prepared to use false or authentic material, in order to make their work interesting.

After the publication of these works Daniel brought out another study, Europe Islam and the West (1966) which applied a similar mode of investigation to material from the seventeenth century to the end of the nineteenth century. His method was the same and his focus was on the general aspects of Islam though his findings were comparatively variable. His conclusion regarding these variations was that, though there was modification in European thought about Islam, the variations were negligible and the old tradition of polemic was being perpetuated well into the nineteenth century.

The books discussed above had been in circulation for a considerable period without arousing much controversy. It was only when Edward Said's book Orientalism was published in 1978 that academic circles in the west underwent a seismic experience. Said was usurped as the proponent of Islam by both Muslims and non-Muslims. This was a reaction which equally bewildered Said as it was not what he had intended. The response to his book was so confusing that Said has had to write an afterword to the latest edition of Orientalism reprinted in Britain in 1995. There he also distances himself from the hysterical conflict between the east and west to which he is erroneously supposed to have contributed.⁶ This may result from the fact that he was indigenous to the Arab community if not to the majority faith, and was considered as one with Islam by both Muslims and non-Muslims. A study of Said's book shows that what had

⁶ Edward Said, Orientalism (1978; New York: Penguin, 1995) 329-333, 343.

been expressed by earlier writers in a circumspect academic tradition was only reasserted by Said with an element of passion. Said's study involved a closer and more personal perspective of Orientalism as it related to the Middle East, since he had been subjected to it. The use of the word "orient" by a journalist, while describing the civil war in Lebanon in 1975-76, led him to an exposé of how the term was coined and appropriated into the study of Orientalism by post-Enlightenment Europe. Said limited his study to the Anglo-French-American experience of Islam as manifested in the Arab countries, Persia and India. According to Said, the writers of those cultures were at the most provoked by the "real orient" and very rarely guided by it.⁷ On the contrary they distanced themselves from the exotic "other", thus dividing the world into the occident and the orient. He argued that Orientalism was a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient and more to do with the western world. Said stated that, although most socially aware scholars denied the tendency to be influenced by political, institutional and ideological constraints, they accepted the constraints imposed on a writer by the importance of intertextuality, conventions, predecessors and rhetorical styles. By underscoring these factors Said did not denigrate culture, on the contrary he felt that these internal constraints were productive and not unilaterally inhibiting. He considered Orientalism to be a dynamic exchange between individual authors and the large political concerns shaped by the empires of Britain, France and America. As an example he cites Edward Lane's The Manners and Customs of the Modern

⁷Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Penguin, 1978) 22. Henceforth Orientalism.

Egyptians which became a classic, not because of the reflection of racial superiority, but because of its style and its historical and anthropological observations.⁸ To prove his case Said adopted a hybrid approach that was historical as well as "anthropological", according to his idea that all texts were worldly and circumstantial and varied not only from genre to genre but from one historical period to another historical period. He continues by discussing the stereotyping of the Orient as reinforced in the modern world of mass communication. In what is perhaps his most provocative comment on the political milieu in America, Said describes Orientalism as a secret sharer of western anti-Semitism, pertaining to the Islamic branch. He then concludes with the hope of having contributed to a better understanding of cultural domination and to have stimulated a new kind of dealing which would eliminate the "orient" and "occident" in order to advance upon the unlearning of the past.⁹

In spite of the scope and importance of Orientalism another book by Said, Covering Islam (1981), seems more relevant for this thesis. Here Said focuses on the depiction of Islam in the American media after the oil crisis of the seventies. The attitude displayed in those contributions which promoted the west against Islam¹⁰ is representative of literature in other non-Muslim information services. Said expresses the hope of an honest assessment of this problem being made in the future, if it is undertaken by someone who is answerable and in uncoercive contact with the culture being studied; this person must also possess knowledge

⁸Said, Orientalism 12-15.

⁹Said, Orientalism 28.

of the social world which forms the basis of interpretation.¹¹ The present thesis has followed the requirements of this guideline in order to attempt to promote the necessary understanding.

Written in the same mode as Said's Orientalism but with a different hypothesis which stresses the role of Islam is Europe and the Mystique of Islam by Maxime Rodinson. An English translation of this book, which was originally written in French was published in 1988. This was a study of what lies behind the intellectual and spiritual ideas and the emotions which were responsible for the distorted development of Orientalism in Europe. Being influenced by leftist thinking, the study, though devoid of religious bias, was ideologically loaded in favour of the oppressed Muslims. Rodinson sought to prove that, while absolute neutrality was lacking in traditional scholarship, bias could not be ignored nor remedied by a total swing in the direction of the misrepresented.¹² According to Rodinson the Islamic peoples, as part of the world's underprivileged masses, naturally long to improve their situation. This effort on the part of the Muslims arouses an unnecessary fear amongst Europeans, similar to that which his forbears underwent. Rodinson advises that a balance between the two opinions regarding Islam is necessary and that, while nothing represents a final panacea, neither was Islam the "Hell of the Apocalypse" of today.¹³ He then presents an interesting study of the development of Orientalism up to the twentieth century with

¹⁰Edward Said, Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World (London: Routledge, 1981) 4,5, introduction xi. Henceforth Covering Islam.

¹¹Said, Covering Islam 155.

¹²Maxime Rodinson, introduction Europe and the Mystique of Islam trans. Roger Venius (London: Tauris, 1988) 12.

emphasis on the French contribution to it. This historical survey consists of many peaks and troughs in European attitudes towards the Muslims. The interspersal of peaks representing favourable attitudes towards Islam is informative, but they are too few as well as too obscure and insignificant to have moulded attitudes. Rodinson concludes with a detailed analysis of the attitudes prevailing in the modern world, and with proposals for the future of Orientalism.

Albert Hourani also discussed this issue in Islam In European Thought of 1991, a collection of essays in which he provides an exemplary introductory study of the theme outlined in his title. According to Hourani the two sides, Islam and Christianity, were separated by conflict yet held together by ties of a different kind.¹⁴

A thousand years after the initial contact between them there was comparatively less knowledge of Islam in Europe but more about Christianity in Muslim lands, because of the large Christian populations still resident there.¹⁵ In spite of Muslim occupation of Europe since the eighth century, according to Hourani awareness of the Muslim world in the west increased between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries. This was a result of the presence in Europe of the Ottoman empire. There was a need to know more about the Ottomans as they usually ruled through a local representative and only instituted permanent embassies during the Napoleonic wars.¹⁶ Interest in Islam was to be

¹³Rodinson, introduction 14.

¹⁴Albert Hourani Islam in European thought (Cambridge:Cambridge UP, 1991) 6.

¹⁵Hourani, 9.

¹⁶Hourani, 11.

supplemented by a philological interest in the peoples of the empire well into the twentieth century.

The purpose of the present thesis is to continue in the mode of study initiated by the above mentioned writers but in addition to compare the existing misconceptions with their counterparts in the tenets of Islamic theology. As these studies had provided detailed accounts of the western sources for the prejudices against Islam and Muslims, a requirement was created for an explanation of the other half of the picture. It was therefore decided to supplement these works with a study of indigenous sources of the misunderstandings and to gauge the change these concepts underwent while passing from one culture into another. The previous studies had established the case for misrepresentations of Islam in English literature, largely concerning themselves with the period up to the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was concluded that there had been a consistency in the misunderstanding of Islam and the Muslims, with only superficial changes between the initial forming of the misconcepts and the encounters up to the early nineteenth century. This thesis continues the study from that period up to the eve of the twentieth century.

This thesis will concentrate on a study of the Victorian Age (1840-1900) and of general works of literature written then. Some exceptions have been made to include writers falling outside the period in order to provide either a base or apex for the pyramid of references. In this thesis the study of western books about Islamic theology has been kept to a minimum as their function from the ecclesiastical point of view is self-evident and may not reflect the view of the

general public. Therefore the theme of misrepresentation of Islam and of Muslim behaviour reflective of it has been traced, as contained in poetry, novels, drama, prose and fiction as well as non-fictional prose which includes travel writing, biography, autobiography, correspondence and journals. A search of the newspapers, periodicals and documents of the period has also been undertaken. To substantiate the ideas found in literature, research into certain cultural aspects of the Age was also conducted. This has included works of art, music and theatre, all of which provided popular entertainment. Unfortunately during the course of the project, it became evident that the misunderstanding about Islam and the Muslims was compounded by the reinforcement of the earlier misconceptions and by the behaviour of certain indigenous Muslims belonging to nations that had been colonised.

There was also confusion in the works concerned with reference to the depiction of peoples or customs from differing countries and societies. This may have resulted from the fact that Islam has a protoplasmic effect on all the societies that have accepted it. Islam has managed to create a superficial unity between nations as diverse as the Arabs in the deserts of the Middle east and those in the tropical Far east, while still allowing them to retain their national individuality. However the ability of Islam to integrate so effectively with cultural forms has also led to confusion about what is stipulated by the religion and what is the requirement of culture and society.

This idea of Islam's universality also leads to the propagation of misnomers such as, among others the description of art, music, dress, and behaviour, as

“Islamic”. It is very important that a clear distinction be made between Islamic values and Muslim manifestations. In order to clarify the use of the two terms as used in this thesis, certain conditions will have to be kept in mind. The delineation reached by this method will facilitate a clearer understanding of the issues under discussion. Henceforward in the thesis the term "Islamic" will be applied to values that are found in the Qur'an, and those practices (other than private ones) that were stipulated in the Prophet's lifetime and are universally accepted in the Muslim world. Anything introduced into the Muslim world after the death of Muhammad, which he did not practice and about which there is a division of opinion in the Muslim world, will be termed "Muslim". In between these two divisions of Islam and Muslim is a grey area of those interpretations of the Qur'an and *hadith* made by scholars on which the Muslim schools of law were unanimous and which were therefore incorporated into the religious law. However the parameters of this thesis avoid the inclusion of these legal rulings in order to avoid being inordinately expansive. Therefore Islam will also be used to refer to the religion, while Muslim will pertain to those who practice of the religion. Thus the term Islamic is applied particularly to the five fundamentals of Islam which are: the acceptance of only one God and Muhammad as His Messenger, prayer, almsgiving, fasting, performing the pilgrimage for those able to do so. The difference between the two terms is that what is Islamic is accepted in its entirety by Muslims and provides the fulcrum for any incorporation in Muslim theology that is necessitated by circumstance or the passage of time. The term Muslim is used to qualify mostly what came about, after the death of the Prophet, and

because these additions were made by successive Muslims, there were differences of opinion. The injunctions introduced by Muslims have also been incorporated into the practice of the religion, but do not possess the feature of immutability as do the Islamic ones. This distinction is manifested by Muslims even in the formalities regarding rituals like prayer and fasting. There were certain requirements which were inviolable as these were specified and practised as such by the Prophet himself. Muslims know that if these precepts are neglected it is equated with religious dereliction. Apart from these two categories there are those practices which were performed by the Prophet, which he stated did not form part of indispensable canonical procedure. If performed the effects were meritorious but could be overlooked without any effect on religious duties.

After establishing the distinction in the Muslim world there is a necessity to differentiate between Muslims and their critics. This differentiation has involved the inevitable use of the terms "east" and "west" as used by earlier writers, but with the distinction that east in this thesis refers to the Muslim world in particular. The intention in using these terms has been far from one of creating antagonism, but rather is an intention to form a basis for bringing understanding between the two worlds. The system of recording dates throughout this thesis has been based on that of the Common Era or C.E. unless specified differently.

This thesis makes an effort to go beyond the misrepresentations of Islam and to attempt to discover the co-relation between the original concept and eventual misconception. This is an approach which has at times been touched

upon by the writers mentioned previously but has seldom been employed methodically.

The process required an intensive search into nineteenth century English literature as well as into works of the earliest Islamic and Muslim theology, in order to establish or challenge the validity of the ideas about Islam prevalent in the English literary works. It has been a quest for a means to overcome the discrepancies between the outsider and insider so that a balance between the two may be reached.

The thesis is set out as follows:

CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION: The opening of the book discusses previous works in order to provide a background for the proposed study. It also involves a description of the method used in the forthcoming chapters.

CHAPTER II : POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: This chapter sets out the general background of opinion regarding Islam and the Muslims prevailing in the west and in particular in the two major spheres of British influence, India and the Ottoman Empire. A general description of the political, interaction in these areas sets the scene for the main body of the thesis.

Chapter III : LITERARY BACKGROUND: This chapter establishes the literary and cultural background up to the Victorian Age.

Chapter IV : MUSIC THEATRE AND THE ARTS: This section involves a survey of music, theatrical and artistic representations with an eastern theme, all of which flourished during the nineteenth century and contributed to the

reinforcement of the images provided by historical accounts. The research on the theatre is supplemented by an appended table of performances.

CHAPTER V : THE QUR'AN: This chapter deals with the Qur'an, the main force in the establishment of Islam. It discusses the history of the development in the written form of the Qur'an, its translations and exegeses, and considers some of the misconceptions regarding it. Then selected ideas and *ayahs* which have been referred to in English literature are discussed and examined with reference to their Islamic exposition.

CHAPTER VI : MUHAMMAD: This chapter centres on the life of Muhammad the Prophet of Islam as depicted by English writers in the nineteenth century. In order to place the ideas contained in these works in context a historical survey of the Prophet's life was required. This led to a detailed study of the development of Arabic literature as well as of the secular and religious aspects which were intermingled for many years.

CHAPTER VII : GENERAL MISCONCEPTIONS: This chapter includes a conglomeration of misconceptions relating to a wide-range of subjects which involved considerable flights of fancy in the world of English literature. As with the previous chapters Islamic precepts in these areas are juxtaposed with western notions about them. The plethora of material researched for this chapter reveals a widespread interest in Muslim societies. This being a time of imperial expansion there was greater interaction with Muslim countries, and, as each separate country retained its individuality, a larger body of different Islamic concepts emerged, apparently manifested by each of these countries .

CHAPTER VIII : WOMEN: This chapter concentrates on the misconceptions regarding Muslim women and here also abundant material is found for discussion. This presumably reflects the greater interest in the subject and there was in fact fertile ground for fostering misconceptions. As in previous chapters, selected Islamic concepts and their relation to the various allegations are discussed and juxtaposed.

CHAPTER IX : AFTERWORD: In conclusion a comparison is made with another similarly misrepresented stereotype in English literature, that of the Jew. In conclusion ideas for overcoming the problems raised are discussed.

The chief drawback encountered while writing this thesis was that, even though a single concept was being traced in the English writings it tended to become unwieldy. This problem arose because a vast field of literature spread over a large time span was being studied. Inevitably certain parameters had to be placed in order to maintain the thesis as a readable account. While studying the depiction of Islam and Muslims in works of English Literature, the references collected were purposely understood as they were presented, for that was how the general public accepted them. A deliberate effort was made to avoid comment on the style or personal predilections of the writers as were any readings into the subtext. The other limitation that has been imposed on this study was that western theological works on Islam have been generally avoided and only used where necessary.

In the discussion of access to Islamic theological literature a large number of translations of general works were consulted, as well as numerous translations

and exegeses of the Qur'an and different collections of *hadith*. Because there is a tendency to follow individual preferences in considering writings about religious texts, various translations and exegeses of the Qur'an were consulted regarding the explanation of Qur'anic *ayahs*, out of which only one interpretation was selected for quotation in this thesis. The purpose behind this selection was that it would provide a continuity, as well as a text that was more than a translation. Traditions about the Prophet's life or *hadith* were also widely consulted, but not quoted singly as that would have been beyond the scope of the thesis. In order to accommodate most Muslim opinion, a specific attempt was made to include only those works that pertained to the formative period of Islamic thought and the development of opinion amongst a majority of Muslims of the time. This delineation pointed in the direction of the earliest known sources regarding the development of Islamic theology, which are generally accepted by all. The selection was based on the idea that these theological works were the basis on which later developments in the Muslim world were founded and will function as an acceptable norm to most Muslim viewpoints. At times, in contravention of this limitation, relevant translations of certain Muslim works on theology, art, music and other general subjects were also consulted. After considering all these varied representations a general consensus regarding each issue was evolved and this was then juxtaposed against the non-indigenous, erroneous one. Consequently anybody who might want to place this study of Islamic concepts against their western milieu would only need to refer to the books mentioned at the beginning.

It must be pointed out that, in spite of the set delineations, a massive amount of material was culled out of English works, out of which a selection of the most frequently occurring misconceptions was made for examination. This study pre-supposes the fact that misconceptions were prevalent, and that the western background for these ideas had been documented. What had been attempted at times in these works but left incomplete were detailed analyses of the Islamic concepts that were misrepresented. Thus a deliberate decision was made to concentrate on the Islamic background of the misconceptions prevalent in this collection. Dispensing with moribund confusion this process would in turn put the last piece of the jigsaw puzzle in place so that a complete picture could emerge.

CHAPTER II - HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

“Faction” seems to be an appropriate epithet for the genre of literature which, during and before the nineteenth century, introduces the subject of Islam and its Prophet Muhammad, into the western world. Whether it was a work of theology, fiction, history, translation, travel, prose, poetry or drama, misrepresentation is generally manifest in all. This was usually the result of a symbiosis of an ill-informed assimilation of facts and of a desire for sensationalism. Apart from the reports of certain chroniclers describing the initial interaction with Muslims such misinformation was impervious to the age in which it was written. Whether this took place in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, or the Victorian Age made no substantial difference, as prejudices of varying degrees continued to emerge.

This ambivalence regarding the attitude of the "west", wherever it may have been geographically located, towards the barbaric "east" (to whichever part of the world this may have referred at the time), existed long before Islam entered the world theatre. It stretches as far back into history as the Scythian incursion into Thrace, the overtaking of the Assyrians by the Babylonian Empire, the Greek expansion into Carthage, the Persians extending into Greece and Egypt, or the

Macedonian invasion of Greece. Alexander of Macedon reversed the usual direction of occupation by attacking from the west when he conquered Persia and India. This pattern was also to be seen in the Rome-Egypt nexus. Reverting to the previous norm in Europe were the occupation of England by the Romans and the Persian conflict with the Roman empire. This was followed by the subsequent "Barbarian" invasions of the Huns, Goths, Vandals, Franks, Alammani, Visigoths and Saxons. Then came the split between the Orthodox and Catholic churches and the antagonism towards the Byzantine empire, which intensified after its capitulation to Muslim rule. It also manifested itself in the differences between the Sephardim and Ashkenazim Jews, the conquests of the Americas, and in, amongst others, the Chinese-Japanese equation and, until recently, in the apprehension of the threat from communism. It seems that the "east" has always been demonised, since most invaders have emerged from that direction.

Surprisingly, anxiety regarding Islam was absent in the chronicles written immediately after the Muslims appeared on the scene. The Byzantine, Coptic, Indian and other chroniclers found little to complain about when they were initially put under Muslim rule. Apprehension of mistreatment at the hands of the invaders may have been a reason for the void but that explanation would be demeaning to the courage of the scribes. The alternative contributing factor may be that Islamic rules were strictly enforced at that time and that the Muslims, with their policy of minimum intervention in the affairs of conquered states, proved to be tolerant rulers. According to this policy they kept to their garrison towns and allowed the citizens to continue with their previous customs, as long as they accepted the

Muslims as rulers and paid a tribute in return for protection. The Muslims were scrupulous in their duty to the extent that Abu Ubaidah, the administrator of Syria in the eighth century, returned the *jizya* or tribute to the non-Muslim population when he could not provide them with adequate protection. Up to the end of the Ottoman empire, the Muslims did not even appoint ambassadors in their vassal lands and relied on local appointees through whom they ruled. It is only after the lapse of a considerable period of Muslim rule in various countries that disgruntlement would set in amongst the populace and in recorded chronicles. This may have been due to the developing laxity of the Muslims in observing Islamic rules, or a natural process of resenting the ruling party together with a reaction to the bigotry of some rulers. In Spain the direct presence of Muslims led to such widespread acceptance, that hostility to Islam had to be eventually fuelled by the Catholic church, in reaction to the burgeoning of Islam and to conversions to it. Evidence points to the fact that this was an engineered rather than a spontaneous response whenever and wherever it occurred. The anxiety combined with European economic rivalries, reached its culmination during the Crusades and has continued unabated since then. It would not be incorrect to assume that Islam was thus made to don the mantle of all previous invaders from the east, whether they were Muslims or not was irrelevant. It did not make any difference that the early eighth century Muslim attempts at conquering Constantinople were instigated by the disgruntled Byzantine General Leo who wanted to be made the ruler of a vassal kingdom but reneged on the Muslims when he was appointed the Byzantine

Emperor.¹⁷ The contributions made to the culture, knowledge and civilisation of Europe during periods of Muslim rule are ignored. On the contrary the present Poland still celebrates its deliverance from the Mongols by depicting them wearing the crescent which the Muslims had inherited from the Byzantine Empire, together with its history of opulence and excesses. By doing this the Poles ignore a basic historic reality, that the Mongols were as much a terror to the Muslims at that time as they were to the rest of the world. Indeed they wreaked untold horrors upon the Muslims, including the ransacking of Baghdad and its magnificent libraries, and the decimation of the population of Samarkand. These acts were ironically laid at the doorstep of the victims themselves. The eventual absorption of the Mongols into the Islamic faith came at a later stage. As Norman Daniel testifies: "the European west has long had its own characteristic view, which was formed in the two centuries or so after 1100, and which has been modified only slowly since". The modification seems to have been nominal as far as the nineteenth century was concerned, the only significant change that can be discerned being in the sophistication of method employed.¹⁸

Various writers have put forward their theories regarding this attitude and it would be profitable to study Solomon Nigosian's assertion: "The source of long-standing and persistent misconceptions about Islam among westerners is two-fold. One source is theological, while the other is historical."¹⁹ Albert Hourani also writes that Islam appeared as a problem for Christian Europe first as a military

¹⁷Masud ul Hasan, History of Islam (Lahore: Islamic Institute, 1988) 2 vols. 2:175.

¹⁸Norman Daniel, Islam and the West 1.

enemy and then as a religious threat, as a result of conversions to Islam on a large scale.²⁰

THEOLOGICAL BASIS

At this juncture it would be more practical to amalgamate the two sources as later western commentators have done and consider them as one - theological. This is because most of the historical Muslim east-west conflict has always been seen as having an underlying theological bias, regardless of which side was the initiator, or of the nature of the actual motive. Thus, whether it were the Arab thrust outwards in the seventh century or the invasion of the Crusaders, or the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, or its containment, the conflict has always eventually been symbolised as one between the Crescent and the Cross. The requirement for studying history in all its length, all its breadth and all its depth in order to get the necessary perspective has been sadly lacking whenever the Muslim world has had to be surveyed. As V.G. Kiernan points out, Islam was made to be the arch enemy of Europe, from the seventh to the nineteenth century, replacing Persia in this role.²¹ This abhorrence was so potent that it formulated geographical boundaries as well as historical ones. British Official papers amply illustrates this attitude. When documenting the extent of Muslim rule in 1856 the whole area was described as the "Near and Middle east". Once an included area fell out of Muslim control it was excluded from that nomenclature. The given

¹⁹Soloman Nigosian, Islam (London: Crucible, 1987) 13,14.

²⁰Hourani, 7.

²¹Victor.G Kiernan, The Lords of Human Kind: Back Man, Yellow Man, and White Man in an Age of Empire. (London: Cresset, 1988) 6. Henceforth Lords Of Human Kind.

limits changed substantially between 1856 and 1914, a prime example being the achieving of Serbian independence in 1878. This excluded it from such consideration and countries under Serbian rule reverted to being considered as part of Europe, where conventional geography would place them.²² William Hunter reaffirmed this attitude when he projected this alien division onto the thinking of the Muslims as well, showing an unusual similarity between the two opposing attitudes. He quoted their records to show that Greece, the Danubian countries, Southern Spain and other similar countries with large Muslim populations, even after their overthrow, were not regarded as Islamic once they were wrested from Muslim sovereignty.²³ Conversely Muslims generally accord the same consideration to a living body of Muslims irrespective of whether they are under non-Muslim rule or not as evidenced in the case of, the Soviet Union, Communist China, India and other such countries, unless they are completely extirpated from countries as happened in Spain and Portugal.

CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES

Continuing on the note of theological influence, Hourani comments that George Sale (1697-1736) an English Orientalist and translator of the Qur'an (1734), had introduced the idea of Islam as a scourge to the Christian Church because its members did not live answerable to the religion they had received.

²²David Gillard, Ed. Kenneth Bourne & D. Cameron Watt, general editors British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers From The Foreign Office Confidential Print. Part I from The Mid - Nineteenth Century to the First World War. Series B The Near And Middle East 1856 - 1914 Part I Series B Vol I The Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, 1856-1875. (University Publications of America, 1984) introduction xv.

²³William W. Hunter, The Indian Musalmans. Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen? (London: Trubner, 1871)128. Henceforth Musalmans.

Along with an increase in general knowledge in the western world there was a change in the idea of religion. Some eighteenth century writers had used Islam as an oblique way of criticising Christianity, while a number of French thinkers projected it as nearer to a purely natural faith than Christianity. Edward Gibbon (1737-1794), the British historian, was probably affected by this attitude. His The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire has been constantly referred to in this thesis as it provided a source of knowledge about Islam for most of the writers following him. Gibbon's work though controversial at the time of publication has stood the test of time, and though there may be differences of opinion regarding his inferences on all religions, his use of sources has been commended. Gibbon was subject to personal religious uncertainty and perhaps this was reflected in his ambivalence towards all the faiths he discussed. The publication of the first volume (1776) which dealt with Christianity scandalised Gibbon's public, who thought he was deriding Christianity in discreet sarcasm like a fifth century Pagan philosopher. Even though Gibbon was to counteract this criticism with the publication of a Vindication (1779) his next two volumes (1781) were poorly received. However his magnum opus is considered as much a work of literature as well as history, something which is enhanced by his personal remoteness.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century writers continued to see Islam as a rival to Christianity or as a rationalist attempt to define God and the universe. The expansion of Europe necessitated this and well into the century there was a renewal of thought about Islam. Britain gave rise to the idea of opposition between Islam and Christianity as a result of Evangelicalism which now had a large

empire to save, particularly in India. William Muir (1819-1905), an official, was affected by it, while Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) represented the other range of opinion and was less ambivalent to Islam. There was yet another view promoted earlier by Charles Forster in Mahometanism Unveiled which saw Muhammad as Christ's antagonist who would indirectly shape the course of things and revive Christianity by stimulating a fight against idolatry, Judaism and Christian heresies. This argument may have influenced Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-1872) an English theologian who attended Carlyle's lectures, and, though appreciating the charity of his views on Muhammad, disagreed with Carlyle's idea of religion. Maurice was Professor of Literature and History at King's College London and expressed his views on religion in a series of lectures in 1845-1846 which were published as a book titled The Religions of the World and Their Relations with Christianity. He discussed each of the high religions as for him the essence of religion was the faith in men's hearts. In the case of Islam he considered as inadequate the usual reasons put forward by non-Muslims for its success. He suggested another reason for its success which was that Islam was a judgement of God on guilty nations which had lost Christian virtues, were sunk in the worship of images, religious ceremonies and philosophical theories and were inhabited by pagans who had not known Christianity or rejected it. By the latter half of the nineteenth century Britain was fairly confident of its dominions and could devote time to spreading its influence over the lives of the inhabitants. This was an opinion which Samuel T. Coleridge wanted to express in his incomplete poem

about the Prophet Muhammad.²⁴ A strong wave of evangelism made Britain feel a duty towards spreading the faith and enlightening the natives of its colonies.²⁵ The general feeling of the British public on the subject, largely expressed in relation to India and conveyed in letters and journals, consisted of complaints about the indifference of the British government to Indian politics and in particular to missionary efforts. One of the most important points which the Church of England had to address was how the gospels were to be taught to heathen children so as to produce a native ministry. The schools teaching these, would eventually prepare the ground for the conversion of India. The teaching of science was intended to undermine Hindu and Muslim dogma. English literature would do even more as it was a product of genius which expressed both philosophy and Christian learning.²⁶ Consequently a very strong Missionary force was established in India and obviously there was concern amongst the Indian Muslims at these evangelistic efforts. Their misgivings caused Henry Martin to write a tract in order to silence those mullahs who spoke against Christ and in favour of their own religion. This was in turn sent to the great mullah in Baghdad who was asked to refute Martin's arguments²⁷ The Missionary society in India continued to play a very active role and, encouraged by Evangelical officers of the East India Company, they even organised public religious debates between Muslim (Shaikh Rahmatullah al-Kairanawi) and Christian (Karl Pfander) representatives, which were attended by

²⁴Ernest Hartley Coleridge, The Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1912) 1:329.

²⁵Hourani, 17-21.

²⁶Contemporary Review vol.8 (Jan 1886): 356.

Muir.²⁸ Disconcertingly for the British the Muslims had the upper hand in these debates as they were well read in Christian theological arguments, which had been translated into Urdu. These debates were similar to those which had occurred earlier in the Abbasid and Mughal periods. All of these events had found a place in the written work of the time. In spite of these efforts, the Missionary presence in India did not have the success over the indigenous populace anticipated by Clair-Tisdall when he lectured to fellow Christians in the James Long Lectures during 1891-92. He hoped that his listeners would volunteer for the work the voice of the risen Lord called them to. This work, which was a nobler crusade, was to wrestle with world rulers of darkness through missionary work.²⁹ It may be concluded that, no matter how diverse the views and methods of the various opinions of religious organisations in the west were, they were united in wishing to achieve the same goal which was the containment of Islam.

Simultaneously in Turkey the same results were pursued and it was even believed that the evangelising of the Turks would be an easy task and that even the Sultan would have no choice but to become a Christian.³⁰ In 1852 American Missionaries wrote to Stratford de Radcliffe that the greatest glory for a British Statesman was to be the instrument of God, and, since the Turks were beginning to see Christianity in its purity, he should do his best to forward this.³¹ Stratford de

²⁷James Morier, A Second Journey Through Persia Armenia and Asia Minor to Constantinople, Between the Years 1810 And 1816 (London: Longman, 1818) 244. Henceforth Second Journey.

²⁸Hourani, 8.

²⁹W.St. Clair - Tisdall, The Religion of the Crescent or Islam. its Strength, its Weakness, its Origin, its Influence (New York: Young, 1895) 231.

³⁰David Morier, Photo the Suliote a Tale of Modern Greece 3 vols. (London: Booth, 1857) 3:356. Henceforth Photo the Suliote.

³¹D.Morier, Photo the Suliote 3:357-8.

Radcliffe (1786-1880), an English diplomat, served in Turkey in various posts from 1808-1812. His duty was to counteract French influence at the Porte where he negotiated the treaty of Bucharest. In 1825 as Ambassador to Turkey he mediated on behalf of Greek independence, and was sent in 1831 to delimit Greece. The displeased Russian Tsar refused to receive him when he was designated as an ambassador in 1833. He built-up an extraordinary influence in Turkey during the period 1842-58 and acquired the title of *Great Elchi*. He induced the Sultan to inaugurate reforms, resisted Russia's protectorate over the Orthodox Christians, and was allegedly responsible for the Crimean War.

Whether it was to reinforce public motivation on a religious basis or otherwise, these ventures into foreign lands, or exacerbation against Muslims seemed to be generally accepted amongst English writers at the time. Another reason for the inimical view of the Muslim represented by the Turk may have developed from the policy of the Ottomans of exploiting the indigenous animosity of the races of Europe and launching them against each other. Therefore the initial clashes were often vicious, and, later, to establish control, they would move in Ottoman troops. By doing so the Ottomans would have achieved the conquest, no matter how bloody, by generally preserving their troops as well as avoiding expedient compromise on Islamic values of warfare. The negative view of the Turk which was formed from these encounters was to extend to all Muslims, regardless of nationality.

This animosity was expressed by various authors whenever it was convenient and even if it included writing about Persia. One such writer was James

J. Morier (1780-1849), a diplomat who turned to writing literature on the basis of his travels abroad. Morier served in various capacities on missions to and from Persia, an experience upon which he capitalised, establishing a career as an authority. He was also of the opinion: "It will be a matter of rejoicing that the falsehood of Mohammedanism will gradually be found out and that the people will discard it in favour of the truth".³² Morier's best work, Journey Through Persia (1812) contained observations mixed with the humour of his graphic power. The book provided information about a little known country and became even more influential when it was translated into French and German. Morier wrote it in response to the great interest in Persia he found on his arrival at England. His memoranda on Persia had been published during his journey, but he hoped that his book would now suffice as a link in the chain of information until something more satisfactory was produced. Morier said that his account was unadulterated by partiality and unbiased by any other writer's views and he claimed every species of indulgence from his readers. His Second Journey Through Persia of 1818 was based on another mission, this time as Secretary to Sir George Ousley. Morier, who had earlier been assigned to accompany the Persian ambassador as an interpreter, made unkind fun of the Persian in his books describing the journey from Tehran to London in 1809.³³ The assumed obnoxiousness of the Muslim in general is expanded in Morier's description of the boarding of his ship by the Sheikh of Bushire and his entourage, who, with what Morier describes as the

³²James Morier, preface, Ayesha, the Maid of Kars (London: Bentley, 1846) 5. Henceforth Ayesha.

curiosity and effrontery of Asiatics, spread themselves through every part of the vessel.³⁴

James Fraser (1783-1856) who had voyaged to India, the West Indies and the Himalayas, specialised in books on Persia and the east which he too based on his travels. He was asked by his government to arrange the visit of the two Persian princes when they visited England and he based a work on this. He was also to testify to the enlightening effect of a Christian discourse on the minds of the Muslims.³⁵ However his fiction was considered undistinguished and to have contributed to the decline of the Eastern Tale from the level to which James Morier had brought it in the 1820s and 1830s.

Writing about the Crusades would always have an obvious target as is clear in the work of Edward Bulwer Lytton (1803-1873). Lytton also shared with his friend Benjamin Disraeli a cult of Byron as a literary idol. The friendship only lasted until Disraeli's marriage when a separation occurred between them. However they were both exponents of idealism, an aesthetic of the 1830s which aimed at the exaltation rather than imitation of nature. While Disraeli was more discerning Bulwer Lytton was to express his disapproval of Muslim rule at the opening of the poem The Last Crusader (1852) whose subject is a Christian looking over the battle fields won by the Muslims. His words are:

³³Margaret Morris Cloake, ed. & trans., introduction A Persian at the Court of King George 1809-10 The Journal of Mirza Abul Hassan Khan (London Barrie 1988) 13.

³⁴James Morier, A Journey Through Persia Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, in the Years 1808 and 1809, in Which is Included, Some Account of the Proceedings of His Majesty's Mission, Under Sir Harford Jones, Bart. K.C. to the Court of the King of Persia (London Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, & Brown, 1812) 12. Henceforth Journey Through Persia.

³⁵James Fraser, The Kuzzilbash a Tale of Khorasan 3 vols. (London: Colburn, 1828) 2:156. Henceforth Kuzzilbash.

"Left to the saviour's conquering foes, the land that girds the Saviour's grave;
Where Godfrey's crozier-standard rose, He saw the crescent-banner wave."
The defeated crusader is aroused to ask in despair if God was so careless of his
own? He receives a comforting reply in a vision which tells him "O Warrior! never
by the sword The Savior's Holy Land is won!"³⁶

A strain of evangelism also found its way into the novels of the period
concerned with India. At times this concept appeared inadvertently, perhaps as
found in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre (1847), when Jane contemplates becoming
the wife of a missionary in India, after she is prevented from marrying Mr.
Rochester.³⁷ The theme reverberated well into the century and was particularly
evident in the novels of Hilda C. Gregg who wrote under the pseudonym of
Sydney C. Grier. She had written In Furthest Ind as the autobiography of an East
India Company man. Her Like Another Helen is an epistolary novel about the
Black Hole of Calcutta outrage. In The English Governess of 1894 the sense of
evangelical duty was very clearly expressed in Miss Arbuthnot's advice to Miss
Cecil, on her journey to Baghdad as a governess to a young potentate: "You can
show him a Christian life and exercise a Christian influence".³⁸

In Turkey, William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863) saw evangelising
events more clearly. Comparing the effects of crusaders and commerce on
Muslims, he said that the use of European iron as pikes and helmets had no effect,

³⁶Edward.B.Lytton, The Poetical and Dramatic Works of Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, Bart, 3
vols.(London: Chapman, 1852) 3:268.

³⁷Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre (London: Everyman, 1992) 415.

³⁸Sydney C.Grier, His Excellency's English Governess (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1894) 36.
Henceforth Governess.

but that used as piston-rods and furnace pokers, they would be irresistible.

Allegorising the truth that commerce is stronger than chivalry, Thackeray finished with an image of Mahomet's crescent being extinguished in Fulton's boiler".³⁹ A similar point was made much later by Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) in Androcles And The Lion when he said that the English could convert the Negroes to their faith easily but not the Jews or Muslims as neither of the latter saw any advantage in Salvationism as opposed to their own faith. "The Crusader was surprised to find the Saracen quite as religious and moral as himself, and rather more than civilised".⁴⁰ However resistance to the financial gains which resulted from the technological advance of the west was not so strong, and Thackeray's prophecy was soon realised in an unprecedented manner. Most of the Missionary movements had very little success in converting Jews and Muslims and, as a result, they set about converting Middle eastern Christians from other denominations.⁴¹

CIVILISATION

With the passage of time, as religion came under increasing scrutiny at home, English writers accordingly modified their critical stance and terminology against the Muslim, although the main purpose remained the same. According to Wilfrid Blunt, Europe was still socially hostile and politically aggressive towards Islam and, though it no longer put forward religious zeal as its motive, it now made out its case under the name of civilisation. This crusade was no less a reality, and

³⁹Willam M. Thackeray, Notes of a Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo (London: Chapman, 1845) 94. Henceforth Cornhill to Grand Cairo.

⁴⁰George B. Shaw, Prefaces (London: Odhams, 1938) 551. Henceforth Prefaces.

⁴¹Edward Said, Culture & Imperialism, (London: Chatto, 1993) 46.

this was an opinion Blunt was to forcefully promote throughout his book on the future of Islam.⁴²

In order to assert superiority and to denigrate the subject nations, who included the Muslims amongst others, widespread criticisms were undertaken. C.A. Murray, who was generally a moderate in his views of the Muslims, carried on this image of Muslim brutality late into the century. In a work of 1857 he described an incident, the details of which he claimed were not fit for a citizen of a civilised state, although they were far from degrading in the eyes of an Arab.⁴³ This approach, which could have resulted from ignorance of the "other", is continued in a much later book with a convenient shift in morality, when Murray justifies the slaughter of the decadent beys by the Viceroy, as Muslims were not educated on the same principles as the English. According to Murray the Muslims were accustomed from infancy to bloodshed and to punishments that would make civilised nations shudder. Murray further tried to clarify the Viceroy's act as having probably been carried out at the behest of the Porte.⁴⁴

ETHNOGRAPHY

With the continuing development of science, and in particular following the publication of Darwin's thesis on the Origin of Species, efforts were made to provide empirical proof in order to make the palpable ambivalence regarding races inhabiting the dominions more authentic. These efforts even went to the extent of

⁴²Wilfrid S.Blunt, Future of Islam. (London: Kegan,1882)175. Henceforth Future of Islam.

⁴³C.A Murray, Hassan or the Child of the Pyramid 2 vols. (London: Parker, 1857) 1:110. Henceforth Hassan.

research into the physical manifestation of blushing in people with different skin pigments which was recorded by Charles Darwin in The Expression Of The Emotions in Man And Animals (1872).⁴⁵ It is also relevant to consider the highly dubious ethnographic surveys indulged in by some British anthropologists who photographed the inhabitants of the Andaman islands against backgrounds of grid-like squares in order to compare their physical characteristics more clearly. Such demeaning measures accomplished the colonialist purpose they were instituted for which was to reinforce the prevailing attitude of racial superiority while doing little for the people studied.

The superficiality of other studies conducted with a similar attitude was discussed in Mohar Ali's account of the officially promoted Beverly-Risley report on the Muslims of Bengal. Ali states that according to the protestations of contemporary Muslims of that time, the report was not properly researched and was based only on the censuses of 1872 and 1891. The report stated that the Muslims in Bengal had increased by a million during the interim as a result of the mass conversion of low caste Hindus. The argument was substantiated by including a chart of the prevailing nasal heights. The Muslim protest at this was vociferous, and displayed its own vanity of elitism when the Muslims explained that they had ruled Bengal for over five hundred years. When the Muslims conquered the territory, they sent for immigrants and settled them amongst the people in order to preach to them. Along with lower class Hindus, peoples from the higher classes

⁴⁴C.A.Murray, A Short Memoir of Mohammed Ali Founder of the Vice-Royalty of Egypt (London: Bernard Quatritch, 1898) 40. Henceforth Memoir.

were also converted to Islam as they would otherwise have posed a greater threat to the rulers. Buddhists were also included among the converts. It is pertinent to note that in the Hindu owned newspapers of the period there was no great protest at conversions to Islam, as there was over conversions to Christianity. A Muslim missionary organisation comparable to the Christian one was not in existence. Most important was the fact that Muslims were not the ruling power at the time of the writing of the report. The arbitrary selection of the official report was evidenced when another book written by Rubber with a more authentic theory but this did not receive Government patronage. Its findings were also ignored by Thomas Arnold (1795-1852) in his Preaching of Islam which only included the Beverley-Risley theory, the Census records and extracts from Hunter's The Indian Musalmans.⁴⁶

POLITICAL CONCOMITANCE:

INDIA

On the political front two important studies, purportedly conducted in a different vein to those discussed previously, aimed to achieve results similar to those desired by the Missionaries. These were the studies by W.W. Hunter and Wilfred S. Blunt. William Wilson Hunter (1840-1900) a statistician, entered the civil service of India in 1862. His post as Superintendent Of Public Instruction in

⁴⁵Paul H. Barrett, et.al. A Concordance to Darwin's The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals (Cornell: Cornell UP, 1986). 316.

Orissa enabled him to write the Annals of Rural Bengal of 1868. In 1871 he became director general of the statistical department of India and compiled his first book which was the census of India, in 1872. He retired in 1887 and wrote other books, mostly on Indian subjects. Another work The Indian Musalmans Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen?, contained advice for the British government about the state of affairs regarding the Muslims of India. It advocated a change in policy towards the Muslims which was to coincide with Blunt's opinion and prove equally controversial. Hunter's view was typical of colonial obduracy towards subject peoples and was openly displayed in the dedication of the book when he said that the Muslims had been persistently belligerent and were a permanent source of danger to Empire. This opinion was expressed in spite of an admission that Sikh tyranny was responsible for the uprising of the Muslims against them which in turn had been instigated by the British. Similarly Hunter displayed critical ignorance about the Sikhs when he described them as "Hindu Sikhs" and amalgamated two totally distinct religions of India.⁴⁷

Like Blunt, Hunter also erroneously maintained that the Qur'an would reduce the alternative to conversion to death. Hunter continued with further discrepancies while tracing alleged Muslim misdoing in the past. He criticised the Moghul Emperor Akbar for not including Hindu officers among his leading officers, yet acknowledged Akbar's insistence and successful defence of the appointment of a Hindu finance minister. While tracing the factors responsible for

⁴⁶Muhammad Mohar Ali, History of the Muslims of Bengal 1ed. 2 vols.(Riyad: University, 1985) vol.1b: 754-786.

⁴⁷Hunter, Musalmans 15.

British supremacy over India, Hunter said that the Muslims had transferred power to the British on condition that the old system would continue. The British reply to reneging on this promise was that the old system was so depraved that a replacement was necessary. This had greatly disconcerted the Muslims who further alienated themselves as they became suspicious of British schools and refrained from allowing attendance at them.⁴⁸

Subsequently the educated Muslim had felt marginalised in favour of the Hindus, and Hunter argued that there was a general acceptance of the fact that they, as British subjects, had been neglected. To rectify this imbalance he recommended to the government that the Muslim youth should be educated according to their own indigenous plan without interfering with their religion, believing that in the process of this education, Islam would render them less fanatical, as had happened with the Hindus.⁴⁹

The supposed promotion of Indian Muslims also appeared as a by-product of advice given regarding the political situation in certain other Muslim nations by Wilfred Scawen Blunt (1840-1922), a British diplomat, who became a renowned Arabist and a great supporter of Indian, Egyptian and Irish independence.⁵⁰ Blunt, known for his political verse, love poems and breeding of Arab horses, also stood for parliament and was imprisoned in 1888 for activity in the Irish Land League. While in the British diplomatic service from 1859 to 1870 he travelled in the Near and Middle East espousing the cause of Arbi Pasha and Egyptian nationalism. The

⁴⁸Hunter, Musalmans 149,157,176.

⁴⁹Hunter, Musalmans 210.

Future of Islam, originally published in two consecutive volumes of the Fortnightly Review of 1882, appeared in book form. Another work, published in 1909, was India Under Ripon, a private diary continued from Blunt's Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt. Blunt travelled extensively through North West India and, in 1885, published Ideas About India, which included a sympathetic account of Indian Muslims. A later contribution was "The Shame of the Nineteenth Century", A Letter Addressed To The Times of 24 Dec. 1900, which was critical of the triumphalism of the United Kingdom. Another letter, addressed to the Prime Minister the Marquis of Salisbury, K.G. on 17th May, 1902, was concerned with the mistreatment of khadimas, servants and aimed to protect them. Blunt concluded that the Muslims were as much disaffected towards the British as any other religious group in India. According to him "we do nothing to gain their affection, and they waste none on us" but he pointed out that it was only in the last few years that they had begun to share the general distrust with which Britain is now justly regarded in Islam.⁵¹ Further detailing the problems of the British in India he blamed the presence of the Englishwoman for the fury of retaliation to the rising of 1857, and stated that her increasing influence made amalgamation less possible.⁵² He also pointed out that native Indians were insulted in public for wearing their dress, even at a railway station. Blunt had witnessed an Indian, a friend of the government, who had come to say goodbye to him, being insulted by

⁵⁰Margaret Drabble, The Oxford Companion to English Literature (Oxford, Oxford UP, 1988) 112.

⁵¹Wilfrid S. Blunt, Ideas About India (London: Kegan, 1885) 7 Henceforth Ideas About India .

⁵²Blunt, Ideas About India 47.

an English officer without any other provocation.⁵³ Consequently in the Future of Islam Blunt expressed the hope that the Muslims would renew the glories of the university of Al-Azhar at Cairo in the new university at Hyderabad, which Blunt helped establish under the patronage of the Nizam, He also hoped that it would supersede Aligarh, something in which he was supported by Lord Ripon and Sir Alfred Lyall, Lieutenant Governor of the North West provinces.⁵⁴ Thus the dethroned rulers, who had been long ignored and disaffected, the Muslims of India, were brought into focus. This policy was further endorsed when the views of the local serving British officers were taken into consideration. The situation was alluded to by Edward Lear (1812-1888) on his travels in India, when he met a Scottish engineer, who compared the abilities of the Muslim and Hindu clerks, and favoured the chances of the former if they were only afforded the opportunity.⁵⁵ This was a view that was expressed by Lyall as: "I wouldn't be lectured by Kafirs, or bullied by fat Hindoos;"⁵⁶

Blunt explained that his research for The Future of Islam, was conducted in Jeddah since this was the entry point to Mecca, for pilgrims from all over the world, and that his impression regarding Islam there was quite different from the one he had formed in India, which was comparatively narrower, because of fewer observable nationalities. He based his work on a census he conducted, a study of

⁵³ Blunt, Ideas About India 53.

⁵⁴Blunt, Future of Islam 189, 212.

⁵⁵R Murphy ed. Edward Lear's Indian Journal (London: Jarrolds, 1953) 72.

⁵⁶Alfred Comyn Lyall, "The Old Pindaree" Poems by Sir Alfred Comyns Lyall: Revised and Slightly enlarged from "Verse Written In India". 6th ed, (London:George Routledge, 1907)150, English Poetry Full-Text Database, disc 4, CD-ROM (Cambridge:Chadwyck, 1993) Henceforth English Poetry Full-Text Database .

the diversity of Islam and or its various Muslim sects up to the time of the Wahhabis. Throughout the book he recounted the magnanimous qualities of Islam yet confused them with the depravity of the failing Ottoman empire. Discussing the relationship of England with Islam he stressed that, unlike other European nations with a crusader past, England had a special role as it had withdrawn from the conflict at an honourable time and was devoid of the feeling of revenge. However Blunt's portrayal of Islam was contradictory and the effect it produced was not dissimilar to that of inimical writers from previous ages and varying cultures. He advised promoting the cause of Indian Muslims since they were the largest homogenous body and could affect opinion in the rest of the Muslim world. It was also important to maintain Egyptian goodwill, even though other Europeans could barely influence Egypt and its hostile climate would never sustain them. The Europeans could take over the cities, but the rest of Egypt would always remain Muslim. Another point of interest for exercising control was that England had a moral obligation to abolish slavery and to nurture the more "humane" aspects of Islam everywhere.⁵⁷ However, for Blunt moral obligations could be easily overlooked when it came to the question of the British guarantee against foreign invasion of Turkey. As this promise was conditional on Turkish administrative reforms, it could be circumvented as having been made to the Sultan and not to the Turkish people. Even though it was felt impossible to escape British moral obligation towards the Muslims of Asia Minor and Syria, what mattered was how disposed or able Britain was to implement it. For Blunt, Turkish speaking lands

⁵⁷Blunt, Future of Islam 189.

were outside effective military control and even a dishonourable retreat for Britain would be necessary. He advised his government to overcome Istanbul (which was persistently called by the outdated Byzantine name of Constantinople), an action which was necessary for curtailing the despotic effect of the Ottoman Porte; and to reinstate Mecca as the pivot of spiritual and temporal Islam.

Up to this point Blunt was unreservedly a man of Empire, its preservation being his primary concern, and so far his plans are easily understood. His attitude towards Islam is also self explanatory despite his convoluted manner of expression. He explains that reinstating Mecca would give Muslims a more distinctly religious character and would enforce their dependence on spiritual rather than temporal arms. By achieving this Britain would restore moral life to a greater extent than would be the case by a political victory.⁵⁸ Thus, with nominal sovereignty, a Pan-Islamisation could be fulfilled that would be more appropriate for the British and very different from that of Abd-el-Hamid and the Ulema of Turkey. The Caliphate which had been earlier wrested by the Turks from the Arabs was eventually devolved upon them, more by British insistence than by any serious desire on the part of the Ottomans. Now it was to be prevented from falling into the hands of an enemy of Britain, whether this were France, Russia, Holland or Germany.⁵⁹ This was to be achieved by promoting the interests discussed above. Blunt created a certain confusion about his intentions when he apologised to those Muslim readers who would certainly be disappointed when he predicted political misfortunes for them, including the loss of political power in the Ottoman lands of Europe and

⁵⁸Blunt, Future of Islam 190.

west Asia and their absorption by Russia. He assuaged the offence he caused them with the curious reasoning that it was done with the intention of improving their future. In order to achieve this he recommended the reformation of Islam as necessary for their spiritual development and resurgence.⁶⁰ Simultaneously he was repeatedly urging England "In God's name" to take Islam by the hand and lead her boldly in the path of virtue as the only wise cause and worthier than a century of crusade.⁶¹ He also contradicted his contemporaries when he expressed the belief that Islam would not remain stagnant as it was capable of reformation. He expressed great satisfaction that Egypt and the Al-Azhar had come into their own and were contributing tolerant ideas to Islam.⁶² This desire of Blunt's aroused further confusion regarding his motives, as though he admitted that Islam was spread through reason and faith and that the basic belief was as strong as ever amongst the Muslims. He also advised Islam to give up conquering by the sword. He consoled the Muslims by predicting a spiritual inheritance of Africa and Southern Asia, and the temporal inheritance of Asiatic and African governments when the Europeans tired of them.⁶³

WAHHABIS

Whether Britain or other western powers did seriously act according to this advice is immaterial. The fact remains that the Wahhabis were a sect dominant in the early nineteenth century. They came to power with the western help and

⁵⁹Blunt, Future of Islam 212.

⁶⁰Blunt, preface, Future of Islam 7.

⁶¹Blunt, Future of Islam 21.

⁶²Blunt, preface, Future of Islam 9.

forcefully compelled Muslims to observe the Muslim laws both in public and in private. The founder of the sect, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, (1703-1787) formed an alliance with the local ruler Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud. He modernised their weapons by introducing the use of firearms to achieve their expansionist aims. After facing several setbacks over the years the Wahhabis finally managed to establish their rule over the Arabian Peninsula in 1929. However, by now the Wahhabi doctrines and practices were imposed in a progressively gentler form. As more urban areas passed into Sa'udi control, their cosmopolitan influence could not be ignored.⁶⁴

Hunter reported in The Mussulmans that: "In 1803 when the Wahhabis captured Mecca and Madina they massacred the inhabitants who had refused to accept their creed, plundered and defiled the tombs of the Muhammadan saints, and spared not even the Sacred Mosque itself." They "disdained the compromises by which the rude fanaticism of Muhammad has been skilfully worked up into a system of civil polity, and adapted alike to the internal wants and foreign relations of Musalman States." The Wahhabi revolution in Arabia eventually spawned similar reforming activities in India but followers of the movement were described by Hunter as "The Patna Caliphs", because they were engaged in overt treason. He accused only the Muslims, despite admitting that the rebel troops consisted of "Hindu fanatics" under the leadership of Titu Miyan. This rebellion was basically a peasant uprising against the petty oppressions to which they were subjected by Hindu landlords.⁶⁵

Ignoring these, Hunter concluded that the main conspirators of the widespread

⁶³Blunt, Future of Islam 154, 214.

⁶⁴Cyril Glasse, The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam (London: Stacey, 1989) see "Wahhabis", 414.

⁶⁵Hunter Musalmans, 58, 60, 25.

conspiracy of 1863 included agents of the British Government. Alleged to be religious fanatics they were denied "the glory of martyrdom" and were transported for life. Hunter astutely noted, that the Indian Muslims were bound by their own law to give obedience as long as this was reciprocated by non-interference from the British. If the Raj acted otherwise then they could enforce submission, but could no longer claim obedience from them. Once this was done then even minor grievances attained the gravity of political blunders, and of these the Raj had made many.⁶⁶ The culmination of these mistakes had been in the tragic events of 1857, but the obduracy continued as can be discerned from the literature produced by English writers of the time. Sir Alfred Comyn (1835-1911), who was Lieutenant-Governor of the North West Provinces of India from 1882-87, wrote of events in India: "Ye shall make no terms with the infidel, but smite his soul to hell". In another poem called "Moriturus Loquitur" he wrote "They stood and burnt for a rule of faith" and in "Retrospection", "When Islam had risen and Delhi fell".⁶⁷

In the press two articles on British India appeared in an American periodical called The Atlantic Monthly of November⁶⁸ and December 1857 discussing the "Indian Revolt 1857".⁶⁹ These were as far from the truth as the distance of the Atlantic ocean from India. Similar articles, as well as books like Hunter's, contributed to perpetuating the misunderstanding of the real political situation. A controversy arose between Syed Ahmed Khan and Hunter after the publication of Hunter's book. According to Khan, the Wahhabi trials and Hunter's

⁶⁶Hunter, Musalmans, 98,143.

⁶⁷Lyall, English Poetry Full-Text Database disc 4.

⁶⁸The Atlantic Monthly, vol. I no.I (Nov.1857).

sensational work had drawn the attention of the public to the state of Muslim feeling in India.⁷⁰ As Hunter's book was misleading and was read by all classes of the community, Khan felt compelled to write a refutation of it in his review. Khan was also to disagree with a biography of the Prophet, written by another contemporary, William Muir.

Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898) was a contemporary of Hunter's and a Muslim reformer who founded the Muhammadan Anglo-Indian Oriental Aligarh College which later became a university. Aligarh University gave its name to a modernising movement in India and encouraged access to western education among Muslims in order to bring them level with the Hindus of India who were far ahead of them. Khan argued that Hunter had based his generalisations about the whole Muslim population on a study of the Muslims of Bengal.⁷¹ Hunter confirmed this allegation by stating that the conspiracy which originated in Bengal spread to the Punjab.⁷² The two provinces are separated by a distance of over a thousand miles of land and had totally different cultures. Khan also stated that Hunter had been misled by forces inimical to Wahhabism.⁷³ Outlining the rise of Wahhabism in Arabia and India, Khan said that the Muslim factions were so bitter against each other that it had been impossible for Wahhabis in Arabia to get support from Turkish rulers and that the Ottoman Muhammad Ali had defeated them. In India they were called *Ahl-I-Hadith* and were also suppressed by the

⁶⁹The Atlantic Monthly, vol.I no.II (Dec. 1857).

⁷⁰Syed Ahmed Khan, Review on Dr. Hunters Indian Musalmans: Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen? (Benares: Medical, 1872) 5.

⁷¹Khan, 7.

⁷²Hunter, Musalmans 210, 9.

various Muslim rulers till the British allowed them to practise freely, and encouraged them to fight against Sikh oppression in the North West Frontier region of India. They were also strongly resisted by the tribesmen of the Frontier until 1852 when the persecutions in other parts of India began and both Hindu and Muslims fled to the area for sanctuary. Although there were occasional skirmishes with the British forces on the Frontier borders none were planned rebellions. The Wahhabis were first known as "Ghazis" or "Jihadis", both terms being misapplied as any Muslim who participates in a religious war could be given this name.⁷⁴ According to Khan the reformation of the Muslim faith was compatible with living as a British subject⁷⁵ as the British fulfilled the Islamic criteria of rulers who were to be obeyed, since they were not coercing the practice of Islam. Khan cited the example of a Wahhabi leader, Moulvi Mahbub Ali, who was asked by Bukht Khan, a member of another Muslim faction, to sign a proclamation for a religious war against the British. The Wahhabi refused to do so and cited the precepts of their religion, according to which Muslims could not rebel against the British. He also upbraided the other Muslims for the inhuman cruelties perpetrated by them on European women and children⁷⁶ and reminded them of the principle of migration when Muhammad had himself sent his community to seek refuge in Christian Abyssinia. After 1857 collisions with the British became frequent and it was alleged that funds for the fanatics, were provided from the collection of religious charity incumbent on every eligible Muslim. The irony of the situation was that the

⁷³Khan, 29.

⁷⁴Khan, 12.

⁷⁵Khan, 40.

Muslim reformers were working against the misrule over the Muslims by the Sikhs in the North west of India, something in which they were encouraged by the British. Therefore their struggle was not against the British, in fact they even tried to dissuade Muslims from taking part in the violence of 1857 along with the Hindus of India, as a result of Indian nationalism. The British Raj had reached its zenith and there were rumbles of discontent in the empire. The populace of India as a whole was antagonistic to British rule. These rumblings found an outlet in 1857 and were amplified by other insurrections. However the people who paid the highest price were the Muslims. The situation was evident in the documented records of world-wide rebellion, predominantly Muslim led, and it did not require great prophetic power to predict the violence that eventually took place in India.

The method of executing educational policy in the Ottoman empire during the nineteenth century was different to that in India because of the variety of countries and foreign powers involved. At the end of the eighteenth century the educational institutions in the central Arab lands of Hijaz, Syria, and Egypt were superior to their counterparts elsewhere.⁷⁷ The French occupation of Egypt and Syria was to cause their dislocation and physical destruction. However the initiation of modernisation was actuated by the national leaders, beginning at the top in Istanbul. The aim of these institutions was not educational but to provide a westernised military machinery.⁷⁸ Though this policy was to be abandoned by the middle of the nineteenth century it had by then resulted in extensive French, Italian

⁷⁶Khan, 16.

⁷⁷A.L Tibawi, Islamic Education (London: Luzac, 1979) 47.

⁷⁸Tibawi, 50.

and Greek colonies which enjoyed and exploited extra-territorial rights in commerce and industry, as well as in education, through the Ottoman empire.⁷⁹ The eventual institution of dual control of Britain and France over the public services in Egypt after the opening of the Suez canal was to signal the resistance to foreign influence.⁸⁰ The result of interference was equally debilitating elsewhere in the empire whether the European influence was introduced deliberately by Ottoman governments, or imposed by occupying powers or insinuated gradually through educational missionary work.⁸¹ Thus the promotion of the Muslim cause in the Empire by the British, whether political or educational, came about as a result of their efforts to prevent the Porte from falling into enemy hands and has to be considered along with other efforts at stabilising their colonial rule. Thus the ambivalence regarding Islam formulated the basis of the British Raj's political and educational policies with the aim of Islam's containment, coinciding with that of the missionaries.

TURKEY

An interesting example of the way in which the constant flux between literature and public policy prevented an objective appraisal is provided by the depiction of Turkey which culminated in the incident of the Bulgarian Horrors. An ambivalence parallel to that concerning the Muslims in India was also observed in the attitude of the British in Turkey. By the nineteenth century most of the Muslim world had been effectively subjugated and the failing Ottoman empire

⁷⁹Tibawi, 56.

⁸⁰Tibawi, 59.

alone provided a semblance of opposition. Seen as an embodiment of the "Muslim" by the rest of the world Turkey had therefore to be pilloried. Thomas Hardy illustrates this while describing the ancient Mummers play, when St. George fights the Saracen/Turkish Knight in The Return of the Native, published in 1878. Here Hardy writes that when eventually the Turk is cut to the ground he falls by degrees, like his empire."- dying as hard in this venerable drama as he is said to do at the present day."⁸²

According to Andrina Stiles in her book on Ottoman history the attempt at representing Ottoman sources was superficial as there were very few such sources were available in the nineteenth century.⁸³ On the contrary nonindigenous sources were numerous and generally unambiguous in their attitude. This position is outlined by Blunt and a summary of it is contained in an official British memorandum of 30 June 1856 concerning Turkish reforms. This states that "Mohammedanism with its ablutions and innumerable calls to prayer, fasts precepts restraints and allowed indulgence of the passions was considered suitable only for the eastern type of people".⁸⁴ The value of such confidential documents was stressed as they gave information about the controlled dismemberment and uncontrolled modernisation of the Near and Middle East. These memoranda also expressed the unconsciously transmitted values of those who wrote them. The official papers record these at great length and display the British mindset of the time when they describe the Turks as being unfit for incorporation into Europe

⁸¹Tibawi, 68.

⁸²Thomas Hardy, Return of the Native (London: Macmillan, 1985) 128,139.

⁸³Andrina Stiles, The Ottoman Empire 1450-1700 (London:Hodder & Stoughton, 1989) 7.

because their domestic customs were partly a result of their eastern origin and partly of their religion. These customs included the segregation of women and, as a result, the early rising from public audiences by the Sultan and his retirement to the harem. Fantastic displays in public entertainment were another argument against the amalgamation of the Turks with Europe. The last disqualification was particularly ironic considering the British relish for pageantry. The officials also found the Qur'an incompatible with the European way of life. The memorandum concluded with the belief that it was impossible for Turkey to participate in Europe while practising the laws of the Qur'an in its civil and religious polity. These laws were considered as subversive of morality and justice and opposed to all progress in the enlightening and humanising of the species. The British officers believed that amendments were not enough, and that legal and administrative regulations must be enforced in order to wipe away the evils spawned by fanaticism and by conquests confirmed by religious legislation and perpetuated by the customs of several countries. The Porte had to feel beholden to the allied powers of Christendom which were saving it from imminent peril. The continued weakness of the Ottoman Empire would lead to a grand struggle for the partition of Europe.⁸⁵ This in turn would lead to a bloody conclusion for all concerned, but as usual the Turks were held responsible for the carnage. Kiernan noted that such ferocity was always believed to be the attribute of uncivilised nations whereas,

⁸⁴Gillard, introduction I :(doc 9) 9.

⁸⁵Gillard, I: (doc.9) introduction xvi, 10,17,2, (doc.10)19.

oftener than not, it was European ferocity which had forced these nations to retaliate.⁸⁶

Political policy was reinforced through a biography by John Davenport who was to say, in the advertisement for The Life Of Ali Pasha of 1837, that for two centuries the Ottoman Empire had been disintegrating. The incumbent Sultan Mahmoud had been remedying that effect in vain. In a summation reminiscent of Blunt's confusion Davenport argued that it was necessary for the peace of Europe that Turkey should be stabilised. Hence the hope that the public would favourably receive the biography of one of the most celebrated Ottoman Pashas "one of the numerous dilapidators of Turkish resources, and scourges of Turkish people" and see the vampyre effect with which subaltern tyrants can exhaust the vital principle of an extensive empire".

The same Ali Pasha, the most profligate of Ottoman suzerain chiefs in Albania, who matched his religion to the demands of expediency, had earlier been introduced to Europe through Byron's highly influential Childe Harold of 1812. This was a poem about the travels and reflections of a pilgrim who leaves behind an indulgent past and begins his journey in Albania and continues into Spain and Portugal. He describes the Albanian ruler as:

“...whose dread command
Is lawless law; for with a bloody hand
He sways a nation, turbulent and bold.”⁸⁷

⁸⁶Kiernan, Lords of Human Kind 313.

⁸⁷George Gordon Byron, The Poetical Works of Lord Byron (Edinburgh: Nimmo, n.d.) 676. Henceforth Works. 21.

The Pasha's cavalier attitude eventually represented the epitome of the Turk while it was acknowledged that he was the bane of the Ottoman Sultan's life. This eventually led to the Pasha being allegedly assassinated as the result of a Royal court summons.⁸⁸ In spite of this anomaly the Ottomans and the latter Turks could not be absolved of all wrong doing as that would again be an incomplete depiction. What has to be stressed is that the one sided picture painted by inimical non-indigenous writers needed to be balanced in order to avoid potentially damaging ill-informed invective as is evident in the affair of the Bulgarian Horrors.

The underlying antagonism of the west was to find a public platform in William Ewart Gladstone's (1809-1898) rhetoric about the massacres in Bulgaria in 1876. The demonising of Turkey reached its climax in Gladstone's tirade on the Bulgarian issue even though he was not following the official policy of the time. Turkey had been in the control of France and England for twenty years and had been thought too weak to put down insurrections against her rule. In the case of Bulgaria a Prussian had planned the Turkish campaign. According to Gladstone the Turkish Government was not notably intellectual and yet there grew up, what has been rare in the history of the world, a kind of tolerance in the midst of cruelty, tyranny, and rapine. As a result of this tolerance much of Christian life was contemptuously let alone; the subordinate functions of government were allowed to devolve upon the bishops, an attitude which attracted a race of Greeks to Turkey. This, for Gladstone made up in some degree the deficiencies of Turkish Islam in the "element of mind". The British Government's defence of its own quiescence was

⁸⁸R.A.Davenport, The Life of Ali Pasha, of Tepeleni, Vizier of Epirus - Surnamed Aslan or the

that it had been avoiding exaggeration and, in the attempt to appease the incensed public, they took up an increasingly familiar stance, stating that such things were "expected to happen among savage races, with a different idea or code of morals from our own". Contradicting himself, Gladstone continued "It is not a question of Mahometanism simply, but of Mahometanism compounded with the peculiar character of a race. They are not the mild Mahometans of India, nor the chivalrous Saladins of Syria, nor the cultured Moors of Spain. They were, upon the whole, from the black day when they first entered Europe, the one great anti-human specimen of humanity".⁸⁹ The Turks left a trail of blood and destroyed civilisation: "For the guide of this life they had a relentless fatalism: for its reward hereafter, a sensual paradise". Gladstone continued his accusations that "There is not a criminal in an European gaol, there is not a cannibal in the South Sea Islands, whose indignation would not rise and overboil at the recital of that which has been done".⁹⁰ He may have found inspiration for his rhetoric from Charles Dickens novel A Tale Of Two Cities of 1859 where Dickens writes of " ---- an insensate brutality and ferocity worthy of Abyssinia or Ashantee".⁹¹ Gladstone was certainly greatly influenced by Thomas Moore's Lalla Rookh of 1817 which his diaries record that he read to his wife immediately after their marriage. He was, however inimical to George Eliot (1819-1880) who had her own point of view and criticised the hideous obloquy of Christian strife, describing how "the Turk gazes at it as at

Lion (London: Tegg, 1837) 318.

⁸⁹William.E. Gladstone, Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East (London: Murray, 1876) 12.

⁹⁰Gladstone, 13,12,15,16,19,62.

⁹¹Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities (London:Dent, 1979) 49.

the fighting of beasts to which he has lent an arena". This is in comparison to the equality of the Jews which shone brighter than western freedom amid the despotism of the east.⁹² Eliot's Daniel Deronda of 1876, the last of her novels, contrasts the life of the capricious Gwendolen who enters into an unhappy mercenary marriage and that of Daniel Deronda who discovers his identity as the son of a famous Jewish singer, and devotes his life to promoting the Jewish cause. Gladstone's reservations about Eliot were not surprising as the novel showed her views to be closer to those of Benjamin Disraeli, although the publication of Daniel Deronda elicited Disraeli's famous remark of "When I want to read a novel I write one ". Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) the Prime Minister at that date and at different times in his life a practising novelist travelled extensively in Spain, Italy, Albania, Egypt and the Levant as a young man. In Disraeli's own first novel, Vivian Grey of 1826, the character of Lord Alhambra was intended to represent a sophisticated man, rejecting some of the conventions prevailing in England. In his Alroy of 1833 Disraeli was to be the exception to the general rule of his countrymen when he said "A Turk is a brute, but a Christian is a demon."⁹³ The novel also represented the author's ideal ambition for which he invented a new style. Set in twelfth century Azerbaijan Alroy is a highly coloured romance of Hebrew chivalry, much influenced by Scott, Byron and the Old Testament. The plot concerns a noble Jewish conqueror who becomes Lord of the Levant, Egypt, Syria and India. Eventually corrupted by soft living, Alroy is conquered by Karasme and beheaded. The novel also introduces a supernatural element based on

⁹²George Eliot, Daniel Deronda (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984) 496.

the cabalistic lore which was greatly admired by William Beckford. In the preface Disraeli said that *Alroy* was written as an attempt to commemorate one who rose in the twelfth century. At that time the caliphate was decaying and power was in the hands of the Seljuk Sultans. The Hebrew people living in Baghdad after the destruction of Jerusalem were under the control of a native ruler called the prince of captivity. While they recognised the sovereignty of their conquerors they gained as much power as the kings of Judah themselves. "...their power increased always in an exact proportion with the weakness of the caliphate".

Against this literary background a brief but sensational news item appearing in the liberal press had led to a political furore. The journalist's account, reported at second hand from Istanbul or Constantinople in the Daily News of 23 June 1875, was greatly publicised by Gladstone in his speeches and in his pamphlet on the Bulgarian horrors. Related news items then appeared frequently in The Times from 1 - 17 July 1875 as well as in Parliamentary Papers of 1876. Gladstone had eventually found American reports of events in Bulgaria more credible than those of the British investigative teams and Archibald Forbes wrote a more detailed and authentic account of the situation, as he had been part of a Russian advance party for more than five months. However Forbes was given less credence than the original sensationalist journalist. Forbes' information may in fact also have been slightly tainted as he had no close acquaintance with the Turks and spoke only to prisoners or to those who remained in or returned to the villages. His interpreter was a Serb, a bitter Turkophobe and pro-Bulgarian. Forbes' assessment was that

⁹³Disraeli, Alroy 70.

north of the Balkans, during the Russian advance, atrocities on Turkish refugees did take place. However these were perpetrated by the Bulgarians on the Turks, in places where they were sure that the Russians would not find out. South of the Balkans no harm was done to anyone. He similarly exonerated the Turks from causing any harm while evacuating Sestovol, where they had lived in harmony with the Bulgarians. According to him the Bulgarians owed a deep obligation to the Turks for their forbearance and for leaving them unmolested in the face of the advancing Russians at the end of June and in July 1876. Apparently this debt was overlooked and the treachery and destruction caused to the retreating Turks by the Bulgarians was executed with ferocity. The reasons for this may have had their origin in economic deprivation since most of the inhabitants, living in forests on the periphery of settlements, were desperate characters outside the pale of law. The outrage of the Turks at this carnage prompted an equally vicious retaliation. The barbarism and the mutilation of the dead and wounded by the Bashi Bazouk (translated as "wild head " these were mercenary irregular Turkish troops, notorious for pillage and brutality) took place under the eyes of the regular troops, at the end of a battle between the Russians and Turks. As a result of these horrors, even Forbes came to echo the general view of the day that the Turks must be expelled from Europe.⁹⁴

As events unfolded Gladstone was to publicly admit that he had been misrepresented on the subject of the Bulgarian horrors. He had never said that the Turks should be driven out of Europe nor of their Empire, he had only wanted

⁹⁴Nineteenth Century vol II no.9, (Nov.1877):561-580.

their empire to be retained in its entirety but with the substitution of tribute and suzerainty for a direct administration, as in Rumania. Gladstone claimed that he had been deliberately made out to be anti-Turk so that he could be more soundly denounced. He said that the essence of the 1876 affair lay, not in the massacres themselves, but in the conduct of the Porte regarding them, especially in the falsehood, the chicanery, the mockery of justice, the denial of redress to good Muslims and the reward of bad ones.⁹⁵ Ignoring the fluctuations of the political situation what remained constant in Britain was the animosity felt against the Turks at the time which became so intensified that it blinded the people to localised facts. The Montenegrins are considered the most ferocious of the inhabitants of the Balkans, yet, because they fought against Turkey, they were lauded by Tennyson among others. He was in the habit of composing poems concerning contemporary events and he writes in Montenegro:

O smallest among peoples! rough rock-throne
Of Freedom! warriors beating back the swarm
Of Turkish Islam for five hundred years,
And red with blood the Crescent reels from fight
Before their dauntless hundreds, in prone flight
By thousands down the crags and through the vales.⁹⁶

The poem clearly results from a misconception of the situation and, as has been observed in this chapter literature cannot be divorced from political events. In this case, the obverse may be equally true. It would be preferable if authentic facts were placed in perspective, rendering the account more responsible and an unbiased judgement could be attempted.

⁹⁵Nineteenth Century vol II no.6, (Aug.1877): 163,165.

⁹⁶Christopher Ricks, The Poems of Tennyson (Harlow: Longman,1987) 1240. Henceforth Tennyson.

With the political atmosphere and the historical background so heavily loaded against them it was not surprising to find the Muslims vilified for events that had occurred centuries earlier. As a consequence of these attitudes it was inevitable that Islam was burdened by most of the writers with the sins of its followers wherever they occurred. This factor does not endow Muslims with a mantle of saintliness because they were as capable of perpetrating cruelty as any other civilisation. This study shows that even though other nations perpetrated cruelty in the name of religion, as happened during the Inquisition in Spain and Portugal, only the concerned denomination was vilified. However with the Muslims, even the smallest travesty enacted by minorities brought Islam into question. In the light of this analysis it will be difficult to disagree with the initial qualifying term of "faction" as applied to the way in which literature produced in the non-Muslim world represented Islam. The controversial aspect of this description would be the ratio of both fact and fiction used in producing this amalgamation of literature. The quantification of these materials was attempted by a scrutiny of certain pertinent concepts, which led to the conclusion that the balance was more in the favour of fiction than fact. As John Mackenzie recommends, a complete picture can only emerge if a reversal of the usual scholarly sin is adopted which consists of writing less and less about more and more. History must plunder other disciplines to make the widest connections.⁹⁷ This method has proved an invaluable one in studying the prevailing

⁹⁷John Mackenzie, preface, Orientalism History, theory and the arts (Manchester : Manchester UP, 1995) 11.

misconceptions regarding Islam in English literature up to the end of the Victorian Age.

CHAPTER III - LITERARY BACKGROUND

As in the case of historical and political contacts, the interaction between the western and the eastern world had prepared western public sensibilities and moulded opinion for the relationship with Islam long before the religion appeared on the scene. The conditioning of the western mind had begun through the reports of travellers who had been to the mysterious east. The stories they brought back only served to increase the credulity of their listeners and this trend was to continue with later readers.

TRAVEL

Travel literature written about the east dates as far back into time as ancient Greece when the grotesque descriptions of the people of India found their way into The Marvels Of The East written in the seventh century.⁹⁸ Such writing had an inimical effect upon the western imagination like that discussed in the previous chapter. The Marvels Of The East consists of a letter written by Pharasmes to Emperor Hadrian describing a journey to the east with its monstrous people and animals. In 1929 the Roxburghe Club supported the reproduction of this one of three known manuscripts with an introduction and notes by Montagu Rhodes James (1862-1936). It even includes drawings of those fantastic creatures, prominent amongst them being a headless walking man. It is apparent that, even in Medieval Europe, men and women knew more of stars than they did of Asia. Such

⁹⁸ Montagu Rhodes James, The Marvels of the East Printed by Roxburghe Club at University Press 1929 Mss. no. 614 Bodleian.

fantastic creatures eventually entered European Romanesque art and embedded themselves there for posterity. These images became widespread when they were incorporated into descriptions of the Muslims down the ages. Chaucer, Ben Jonson and Dekker were unanimous in their opinion of the falsity of such traveller's stories, but the fact that the travellers had survived their arduous journeys was enough to endow them with a hero's mantle. Without the remotest chance of their veracity being checked there was nothing to prevent them from adding a few embellishments of their own. This pattern was to persevere through the ages into the nineteenth century when, in spite of travel becoming modernised, public attitudes remained steeped in the past. This aspect of public opinion was of particular significance in relation to accounts of the Muslim world. It is interesting to note that though the centre of Islam was far away, the presence of the Muslims in Spain, which was European soil, had existed from the eighth to the fifteenth century. Information about the people and religion could not have been difficult to come by. The Goths who had been dispersed by the Muslim invaders took the culture they had acquired with them into Germany. Diplomatic relations existed between the Muslims and the Franks, and the Byzantines, amongst others. Relations with Sicily were so good that the Norman armies of Roger I and Frederick II had large contingents of Muslims. Muslim rulers were sought as allies and their armies fought on Italian soil for the Lombard princes, the Byzantines and even the Pope. The argosies of the Muslims dominated the Mediterranean and commercial trade from the eighth century is recorded in Papal, French and

Byzantine history.⁹⁹ However in spite of these widespread contacts considerable ignorance was manifested down the ages by western writers, ignorance of even the basic concepts of Islam.

Amongst Victorian writers of travel there were differences in portrayal but surprising similarity in mistakes, about the beliefs of Muslims. John Carne in his travelogue of 1836 even misplaced the geographical location of the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad, by confusing it with the Kaabah at Mecca. By doing so he managed to negate the fundament of Islam which is against the worship of anyone except God. His seemingly innocuous remark: "an annual myriad advances to the tomb of the prophet"¹⁰⁰, was encumbered with ignorance, if not with misrepresentation. Moore writes of the King of Bucharia who sets off on a pilgrimage to the shrine of the Prophet.¹⁰¹ Scott also makes a similar erroneous remark in the Talisman of 1825 where he writes of an oath: "by the tomb at Mecca, and by the soul of my father".¹⁰²

Conversely Muslim pilgrims do visit the Prophet's tomb, which is in Madina, but they set out for Mecca to visit the Kaabah which is a hollow cuboid structure devoid of any tombs. Byron was aware of the propensity of non-Muslims to confuse the two cities and, distrusting travel books, insisted on accuracy. He asked his friend John Murray to check whether the Prophet's tomb was in Mecca or Madina in order to avoid glaring mistakes. Byron also read

⁹⁹Henry G. Farmer, Historical facts for the Arabian Musical Influence (New York: Olms, 1970) 7-10.

¹⁰⁰John Carne, Syria, The Holy Land, Asia Minor, & C. 1st ed. (London: Fisher, 1836) 1.

¹⁰¹Thomas Moore, Lalla Rookh, an Oriental Romance (London: Longman, 1849) 340. Henceforth Lalla Rookh.

indigenous collections like the Muallaqat,¹⁰³ a pre-Islamic collection of poetry which would have greatly interested him, and he supplemented his knowledge by travelling extensively.

However most of the writers about the eastern world were aptly described by Thomas De Quincey in Confessions of an English Opium Eater of 1826. He wrote a study of his own opium-addiction in which he deduced that the reports about the usage of opium were often lies, whether made by travellers in Turkey. (who may plead the privilege of lying as an old immemorial right), or by professors of medicine.¹⁰⁴ Philip Dodd rightly said that travel literature is located somewhere between fiction and biography.¹⁰⁵ From the early travellers to the later ones these conditions have usually been fulfilled, especially regarding Muslim societies. John Buchan in his novel The Half Hearted of 1900 which is set in India and Scotland, shows the latent heroism of a dilettante which is brought about by a crisis. In the novel, Buchan aptly described travel writers as the worst type of dilettante, introducing the worst type of pseudo-culture from Universities and seeing everything only through the spectacles of their upbringing.¹⁰⁶

There were comparative exceptions to this rule, foremost among them being Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762), the wife of the British ambassador to Turkey. Her letters home portrayed a very different picture to the prevalent

¹⁰²Walter Scott, The Talisman (London: Nelson, 1901) 306. Henceforth Talisman.

¹⁰³Sana A. Al-Humoud "Changing attitudes in literary relations between the Islamic East and Christian West with primary emphasis upon the nineteenth century" (Ph.D thesis University of Denver 1987) 149, 150.

¹⁰⁴Thomas De Quincey, Confessions of an English Opium-Eater (London: Taylor, 1826) 92.

¹⁰⁵Philip Dodd, The Art of Travel (London: Cass, 1982) 151.

¹⁰⁶John Buchan, The Half-Hearted (London: Isbister, 1900) 29.

preconceived notions of the Turks. Writing to her friend, the Countess of Bristol, Lady Montagu said that most of the authors wrote falsehoods about Turkey, for example she notes that the sweating pillar in Santa Sophia is a fabrication.¹⁰⁷ Thackeray was also amongst the few writers who travelled to the east and saw things for himself. He was able to do this because of his post as the correspondent at Istanbul for the Morning Chronicle, which afforded him a reasonable income while he filled his sketchbook with illustrations for publication. He had to write only three letters a month and was sent to Egypt and Syria for news.¹⁰⁸ Thackeray corresponded regularly with his close friend E.G. Fitzgerald (1809-1883), whom he called "old Fitz" and who always helped him with money and sympathy. Fitzgerald was comfortably off both by inheritance and as a result of the great success of his translations of the Rubbayat of Omar Khayyam. Fitzgerald preserved both the letters and the sketches of this correspondence and after Thackeray's death put together a scrapbook which he gave to Lady Ritchie, Thackeray's daughter, who had the collection published privately. The Rubbayat is another example of Oriental poetry which, like the Arabian Nights translation of 1704, captured the imagination of the western public. Like the stories of the Arabian Nights, the Rubbayat is not regarded by the indigenous people as a work of quality. In their view there are better poets in Persian who would have been more worthy of translation. L.R.Pardoe (1806-62) travelled extensively in her adolescence as a result of suspected consumption. In 1853 she travelled to Turkey

¹⁰⁷Mary W. Montagu, The Works of the Right Honourable Lady Mary Wortley Montagu including her Correspondence, Poems And Essays. 5 vols. (London: Phillips, 1803) 3:3.

with her father and familiarised herself sufficiently to write a standard guide to the country, The City of the Sultan of 1837. The exaggerations by writers about the east may also have resulted from a circumstance of which Pardoe gives a succinct explanation: “The European mind has become so imbued with ideas of Oriental mysticism, mysteriousness and magnificence because it has been so long accustomed to pillow its faith on the marvels and metaphors of tourists. It is now to be doubted whether it will willingly cast of its old associations and suffer itself to be undeceived”.¹⁰⁹ Though this comment represents a considerable improvement on the attitudes of other writers, this cavalier attitude has continued until recently and ill-informed books and media dissemination are still to be found in abundance. In later years, in spite of the development of technology and communication, a minimal variation of the distorted image would be provided by writers who had availed themselves of the opportunity of visiting the Arab or other Muslim countries. Continuing Marwan M Obeidat’s observation , in “Lured by the Exotic Levant: The Muslim East to the American Traveler of the Nineteenth Century” which concurs with Maxine Rodinson’s appraisal that travellers “‘selected’ what they saw and ignor(ed) what did not fit in with their preconceived picture (of it)”, thus they “added no particular information of a specific differentiating kind”.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸William M. Thackeray And Edward Fitzgerald A Literary Friendship Unpublished Letters and Verses introduction. Lady Ritchie 25 copies (London: Shorter, 1916) 10. Henceforth Friendship.

¹⁰⁹L.R.Pardoe, The City of the Sultan, and Domestic Manners of the Turks, 2 vols. (1836 London: Colburn, 837) 1:89. Henceforth City of the Sultan.

¹¹⁰Islamic Quarterly 31 (1987): 168.

LITERATURE

Like early cultural interaction between east and west literary contacts have also been perceptible since the Wars of Alexander and were intensified by the advent of Islam. The coincidence of the story of Caedmon (670), an unlearned herdsman whose lifetime was uncannily close to the time of the birth of Islam. Caedmon's sudden gift of singing and of setting passages translated from the scriptures into English poetry bears a striking resemblance to the inspiration of Prophet Muhammad's which resulted in the Qur'an.¹¹¹ This engagement between the two cultures was inevitably to continue into later years and was expressed by Bulwer as: " The Christian warriors further against the swarthy followers of Mahound and Termagaunt", both latter names being used to depict the Prophet of Islam.¹¹² The interest aroused in the west by a burgeoning new religion in close proximity, as well as the visible success of its followers in disparate lands such as Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Spain, and eventually in India and Turkey, increased the curiosity to know more about it. As access to the latest as well as ancient knowledge regarding this new power lay through its language the need for learning it arose. As a result the intellectual element of the western world at that time went to the colleges and libraries in Muslim Spain and Sicily in the pursuit of knowledge, and found that there material and intellectual wealth went hand in

¹¹¹Rida Hawari, "A Study Of The 'Exotic' East In The Works Of Thackeray With Reference To The Cult Of The Oriental In The Eighteenth And Nineteenth Century England". (Ph.D. Thesis: London University, 1967) 15.

¹¹²Edward B Lytton, Leila, or the Siege of Grandada, and Calderon, the Courtier, (Paris:Galignani, 1838) 138. Henceforth Leila.

hand.¹¹³ This Muslim culture was given greater impetus by the Norman conquests, and through direct borrowings or translations from academics of the Muslim world. Apart from acknowledging the Greek origin of some of these translations a collective amnesia about this period of Muslim intellectual history manifests itself amongst later western writers. Rida Hawari says that in the twelfth century early Arabic scholarship was taken up for religious purposes and that the first certainly known Arabic Scholar was Abelard of Bath, Henry II's tutor. The literary interaction influenced not only Chaucer but even Petrarch (1304-1374). Petrarch wrote in the spirit of Asiatic poets whose work he believed had been brought into Europe by Arabs in form as well as spirit.¹¹⁴ In 1602, when the Bodleian Library was being set up, Thomas Pococke was sent to travel around the east and to collect manuscript treasures for the collection. The French were equally interested and D'Herbelot's Bibliothèque Orientale was the forerunner for the Encyclopaedia of Islam. This was a result of the attempt initiated by Francois I of France (during the Renaissance) to familiarise his people with the east. He sent his agents to procure essential works for this purpose. A more natural absorption of an eastern strain was found in Spanish poetry and ballads, which were the result of direct contact with the Arabs over many centuries. This fusion was evident in ancient fourteenth century Spanish ballads with anonymous authors which were known as Romance Moriscos and particularly in the poem Fatima and Radowan, the narrative of an unfaithful lover. These ballads, as their title implies, were probably composed by Moors who lived and intermingled with Christians in the

¹¹³Farmer, 21.

fourteenth century.¹¹⁵ Asin Palacios asserts that Dante's (1265-1321) inspiration for The Inferno came from the legends which had accumulated around the Muslim versions of Prophet's visit to celestial heights, during which it is said that he observed sights of the nether world like those which resonate in Dante's work.¹¹⁶ Four centuries later in England Joseph Addison (1672-1719) also used the Prophet Muhammad's celestial visit to explain the concept of time. Addison introduced Oriental material to illustrate moral truths in his essays for the Rambler and the Spectator. This incident in the Prophet's life has aroused the imagination of many narrators.

The period between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries was of a more accommodative regard towards the personality of Muhammad and a systematic study of Islam also commenced. It was initiated in Paris in 1587, in Leiden in 1613, in Cambridge in 1632 and at Oxford in 1634. Edward Pococke (1604-1691) wrote his Specimen Historiae Arabum which included a study of the basic tenets of Islam as well as a translation of al-Ghazzali.¹¹⁷ Oriental taste invaded domestic English life, gardens were designed in the Oriental manner and words such as genie, and dervish entered English lexicons.¹¹⁸ Francois Bernier (1654 -1688) travelled in the east and served as a physician for twelve years at the court of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. He wrote an account of his travels and experiences in India which was published in 1670-71. Bernier had four different accounts of

¹¹⁴John Drew, India and the Romantic Imagination (Delhi: Oxford UP, 1987) 64.

¹¹⁵Hawari, 13,18,20,129.

¹¹⁶Miguel A. Palacios, preface, Islam and the Divine Comedy (London: Cass, 1968) xiii-xvi.

¹¹⁷Hourani, 13.

¹¹⁸Al-Humoud, 64

the fate of Shuja, the main protagonist against his brother Aurangzeb in the struggle for the throne of India. He included the evidence of eyewitnesses, as great uncertainty prevailed concerning the event.¹¹⁹ The entire work formed the leitmotif and a good deal more of a drama by John Dryden (1631-1700).¹²⁰ Dryden's Aureng-Zebe (including the spelling of the name) was based on Bernier's first English edition, and was initially staged in 1675 and published in 1676. Dr. Johnson (1709-1784) said that it was fortunate that Aurangzeb's nation consisted of people who were unaware of the English stage as he would otherwise be offended. "His country is at such a distance that the manners might be safely falsified and the incidents feigned:- ", the remoteness of the place is remarked by Racine to afford the same conveniences to a poet as the length of time.¹²¹ Curiosity about the east also extended to other religions and Sir William Jones discovered a Sanskrit root for Alexander Pope's (1688-1744) Rape of the Lock of 1712 in The Seizure Of The Lock from the story of Sakuntla by Kalidasa, the earliest Indian writer of Shakespearean stature. Jones was a pioneer in Indian studies, but, according to John Drew, the Germans who were uninhibited by imperial attitudes, responded enthusiastically to Indian intimations of their Aryan roots. This enthusiasm was so great that their nineteenth century research into Indian culture overshadowed the earlier work of British Orientalists.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was influenced by Marco Polo's adventures which eighteenth century Europe discovered to be marvellous as well as accurate. Kubla

¹¹⁹Francois Bernier, Travel in the Mogul Empire A.D.1656-1668 (London: Constable, 1891)112.

¹²⁰Bernier, appendix I, 466.

¹²¹Bernier, preface, 17.

Khan of 1816 seems to be based on Marco Polo's account of the Mongol potentate Mangu Khan's paradisaal Tree which was constructed with pipes of milk and honey, in a manner similar to the descriptions of Islamic paradise.¹²² Heaven in the Qur'an is described as a place where streams of milk and honey will flow for the pleasure of the blessed. Thomas Moore's Lalla Rookh was based in India and caused him to be delighted by the remark of a historian of India who praised his knowledge of the country. When the historian was informed that Moore had never been there he said: "Well this shows that reading D'Herbelot is as good as riding a camel".¹²³ Considering Moore's vagaries, it is evident that this historian had himself never been to the country which he studied. This interest in the "Oriental" was to inspire works like Murray's Noor ed din, which he wrote for a son who had an interest in the east and which was intended to show that the concept of God shone with a dim yet steady light through the gloom and superstition which then pervaded the eastern world.¹²⁴

According to De Vane, Edward Fitzgerald's Rubayyat of 1859 inspired Robert Browning (1812-89) who may have seen it at Dante Gabriel Rossetti's, to write Rabbi Ben Ezra of 1864, a poem written after his wife's death and was concerned with the nature of belief. Browning's Ferishta's Fancy of 1884 is a collection of poems focused on the moral and religious sayings of an imaginary Persian sage. It was probably inspired by Fables of Bidpai, the Arabic version of Sanskrit fables

¹²²Drew, 51,194.

¹²³Moore, preface, Lalla Rookh 39.

¹²⁴Charles A. Murray, preface Nour-Ed-Dyn; or the Light of the Faith an Eastern Fairy Tale. (London: Society For Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1883) 5. Henceforth Nour-Ed-Dyn.

which he read as a boy, but the setting is appropriate to that of Persia.¹²⁵ According to A.J.Langguth, the modern parallel for Fitzgerald's success with the Rubbayat has been the persistent vogue for Khalil Gibran in the nineteenth century. As the Victorian spirit weakened and sank Gibran's sentimental tribute to transient pleasures won the heart of a generation which impatiently awaited the launch of the Edwardian age.¹²⁶

It is possible to approach the popularity of such depictions from a point of view which differs radically from those discussed above. Meenakashi Mukherjee, writing about Jane Austen's novels, says that India figured in diverse ways in the novels of this period, not only as the stereotype of the exotic east, but also as a pretext for criticising England's own social system.¹²⁷ This explanation is equally valid when applied to the novels of Dickens and Thackeray and their concern for the plight of the lower classes in England. Elsie Michie continues in accordance with this theory, in "From Simianized Irish to Oriental Despots: Heathcliff, Rochester and Racial Difference". She states that the Irish famine was invisibly present in the novels of the 1840s, including those of the Brontë sisters, which screen it behind references to the Orient. The Irish were equally the "other" for the Victorians, a point of view reinforced by John Beddoes (a founding member of the Ethnological Society and President of Anthropological Institute), Beddoes' "Index of Nigrescence" was a pseudo-scientific study according to which he confirmed that a greater percentage of "Africanoid celts" lived in Wales and Ireland than in

¹²⁵W.C.De Vane, A Browning Handbook (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1955) 258,426.

¹²⁶A.J.Langguth, Saki:A Life of Hector Hugh Munro (New York: Schuster, 1981) 61.

¹²⁷Meenakashi Mukherjee, Jane Austen (London: Macmillan, 1991) 53.

England. Heathcliff and Rochester are both metaphorically characterised as Oriental despots. It is necessary to acknowledge the historical situation behind racial stereotypes which function as screens, or critics will merely replicate the terms of the stereotype and thus continue their deflecting function.¹²⁸

Recently John Mackenzie has used this argument in reaction to criticism of Orientalism by justifying it with the curious explanation that it was stereotyping the Scots, Irish and the Welsh as well as others.¹²⁹ The marginalisation of these communities, as indeed of any race for that matter, can never be a reason for consolation or for the acceptance of stereotyping by another community. This method could only lead to perpetuating misconceptions that could prove harmful in the future. Whatever the purpose of employing these devices was, the result of both methods was the distortion of the image of the other and the Muslim suffered most from this.

Two of Moore's stories were based on history and Moore used what is called Muslim zeal as an allegory for the racial and religious intolerance of the Protestant Anglo-Irish minority against the Roman Catholic majority in the Fire Worshippers of 1817. This was a tale of Ghebers who maintained their resistance to the Muslim rulers. Hafed, a Gheber, falls in love with Hinda, the Emir's daughter, who discovers his identity when she is captured by the Ghebers; but they are betrayed and both of them die. Similarly the historical figure of Mokanna in Muslim history provided the material for The Veiled Prophet of Kharasan of 1817. This was a story about the luring of Zelica into the harem of Mokanna on the

¹²⁸Novel a Forum on Fiction.vol 25 no. 2 (winter 1992): 125, 126,135, 140.

promise of admission into paradise. Her lover Azim joins the army of the Caliph to overthrow his rival. Mokanna kills himself but Azim accidentally kills Zelica.¹³⁰ Though the sub-text cannot be denied in these works, however the interest in Islam and the Muslims cannot be ignored

EXOTIC EAST

By the middle of the nineteenth century the popularity of the exotic east was firmly established. The only dissenting opinion was voiced by Fraser who seriously reasoned that he was aware of a diminishing of interest in the Oriental tale, perhaps a result of a sameness of subject which may have wearied the public appetite.¹³¹ This opinion may have arisen from the fact that Fraser's own Oriental tales did not sell as well as he would have expected. However it did not dampen Fraser's enthusiasm for writing several sequel novels on the subject. It is perhaps more realistic to accept the opinion expounded in a review of Harriet Martineau's (1802-1876) book about Eastern Life Present and Past which said: "for some time past the East and everything Oriental has had a considerable run."¹³² One of the first leaders of this fashion was William Beckford's Vathek of 1786, the story of the cruel Caliph who makes a pact with Satan and sacrifices fifty children in exchange for a sight of the treasures of pre-Adamite sultans in a ruined city. On his journey there he falls in love with a beautiful companion and once he sees the treasures, he realises the worthlessness of these, his heart bursting into flame as

¹²⁹Mackenzie, preface xii.

¹³⁰Al-Humoud, 124.

¹³¹James Fraser, The Dark Falcon a Tale of the Attruck 4 vols. (London: Bentley, 1844). 4:preface 5.

punishment for his sins. It is said that Beckford's Vathek bore heavily on the nineteenth Century romantic genre and there is little doubt that it influenced Southey, Moore and Byron. The depiction of the Caliph Vathek or Al-Wathiq as the protagonist is selective as he was unique in Muslim history for revealing his homosexuality, and for writing love poetry about an Egyptian boy. Al-Wathiq belonged to the Muttazilite school of thought and established a permanent inquisition for the inhabitants of Baghdad. He was a tyrannical, oppressive and debauched ruler. He persecuted Al-Khuzai, an opponent, and, after personally interrogating him, beheaded him with Samsara, his famous sword.¹³³ A similar theme occurs in Robert Southey's Thalaba of 1801 in which Thalaba, a Muslim, loses his life while destroying a kingdom of magicians under the sea, only to be reunited with his wife in Paradise. A little later, Byron's image of the 'mussalman', a term used for muslim, reflected a superficial change but did not contrast substantially with that of earlier writers. Byron made prolific use of the Oriental tale in his poems and advised Moore to do the same. Moore followed this advice, which was to prove a lucrative step for him. Byron's depiction of the Muslim was also to influence Moore's in Lalla Rookh of 1817 where the frame story tells of the Indian Princess Lalla Rookh's journey to Kashmir to be married to the King of Bukhara. She falls in love with Feramorz, a poet, who keeps her entertained by narrating four verse tales, and eventually turns out to be her betrothed himself.

Another writer who imbibed Byron's modified image of the Muslim was Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) who expressed it in The Revolt of Islam of

¹³²The British Quarterly Review vol.8 no.16 (Nov. 1848): 432,433.

1818, an epic political poem inspired by the French Revolution. The main characters are Laon and Cythna, a brother and sister who initially succeed in a revolt which they celebrate in incestuous lust. However the tyrants overcome them and Islam is subjugated to plague and famine. The two are burnt at the stake but sail to a visionary Hesperides with their illegitimate child. It may be pertinent to note that this poem did not sell very well under the title of Laon and Cythna but immediate interest was shown by the public once the same poem was sold under the name of The Revolt of Islam. Shelley continued to exploit Byron's image in Hellas of 1822, a poem inspired by the Greek war of independence. This trend was to culminate in the twentieth century with James Elroy Flecker's play Hassan, based on an equally bizarre story of a cruel ruler, and on the stories of the murder of young Laon. The play continued to be highly popular in the London theatre for a considerable period.

ARABIAN NIGHTS

Another important reason for western attitudes towards Islam lies in a specific literary source. This was the development of the "Romantic" image of the Arabs or Muslims which resulted from the publication of Antoine Galland's (1646-1715) translation of the Arabian Nights. Soon after this the image of the Muslims became synonymous with that of the Arabian Nights, and this ridiculously fantastic portrait provided unrivalled entertainment. Robert Southey (1774-1843) lends credence to this aspect in his preface to The Curse of Kehama of 1810, a book about Hindu mythology, where he writes: "I began with

¹³³Al-Humoud, 79,81,82.

the Mahomedan religion, as being that with which I was then best acquainted myself, and of which everyone who had read the Arabian Nights Entertainments possessed all the knowledge necessary for readily understanding and entering into the intent and spirit of the poem".¹³⁴ This view would be equivalent to asking people in the east to form an opinion of Christendom on the basis of the Arthurian legends.

An earlier writer who also indulged in this passion for the east was Scott in the Talisman, although Scott had the honesty to admit to the difficulties of depicting a part of the world he had never visited, and which he only knew through early recollections of The Arabian Nights Entertainment. Writing of eastern manners, Scott confessed that he was as thickly wrapped as an Egyptian in his fog.¹³⁵ Leigh Hunt (1784-1859), while tracing his genealogy mentions a Dr Hunt who was a Professor of Hebrew and Arabic at Oxford and says "Perhaps the good old Oriental scholar belongs to our stock, and originated my love of the Arabian Nights!"¹³⁶ Morier speculated that the Arabian Nights might have been of east Persian origin because there was a custom that the Shah would order narratives during his journeys.¹³⁷ Thackeray had a reaction similar to other writers when he first viewed Smyrna on his voyage to Turkey, he was fascinated by all his Arabian

¹³⁴Robert Southey, preface, The Poetical Works of Robert Southey, Collected by Himself 10 vols. (London : Longman, N.D.)5:13,14. Henceforth Works.

¹³⁵Scott, introduction, Talisman 5.

¹³⁶Leigh Hunt, The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt (London: Elder, 1906) 3.

¹³⁷James Morier, The Mirza 3 vols. (London: Bentley, 1841) 1: 6.

Nights images coming to life but was practical enough to confess that it never seemed to be the same after that.¹³⁸

The literature of the period abounds with references to the Arabian Nights, as is still the case today. Emily Eden and her sister Fanny travelled with their brother George and kept house for him in India during his period as Governor General from 1835-1842. Fanny Eden, writing in her journal about her expeditions in India, described breakfast at a palace which is a very Arabian Nights looking building.¹³⁹ L.R.Pardoe's Beauties of the Bosphorus consists of details of the architecture of the Ottomans and comments on their way of living. In her account Pardoe says that before her visit to Turkey she had envisaged adventures as numerous and romantic as those of the Thousand and One Nights.¹⁴⁰ She was soon to find that reality was quite different than her vivid imagination had led her to believe.

Many Victorian writers were influenced by the Arabian Nights, a book which most of them (like most of their readers) had read in childhood. That Charles Dickens was also greatly influenced by the Arabian Nights is apparent from his extensive reference to it in his novels. According to Peter Caracciolo, Dickens began to use the Nights after 1839 when Lane and Henri Torren's translations appeared.¹⁴¹ Simultaneously under the influence of Scott, he was discovering different ways to reach the public. Michael Slater explains that Dickens used the

¹³⁸Thackeray, Friendship 82.

¹³⁹Fanny Eden, Tigers, Durbars and Kings Fanny Edens Indian Journals 1837-38 (London: Murray, 1988) 102.

¹⁴⁰L.R. Pardoe, The Beauties of the Bosphorus (London: Virilire, 1838) 3. Henceforth Bosphorus.

Arabian Nights as a touchstone to point to a good and kind heart when a character such as Tom Pinch in Martin Chuzzlewit enjoyed them and to indicate the reverse if the characters did otherwise, examples of this are Pecksniff also in Martin Chuzzlewit, Scrooge from Christmas Carol, and Gradgrind from Hard Times. Noting a tendency that was common amongst other writers, Slater says that, Dickens generally uses allusions to the Arabian Nights to evoke glamour, the romantic side of familiar things, or in order to parody.¹⁴² Examples of these usages by Dickens can be observed in the following passages from his novels.

In Martin Chuzzlewit of 1843, writing about books to be found in a children's book shop Dickens says there were Persian Tales and Arabian Nights".¹⁴³ One child who read these was Scrooge. In A Christmas Carol of 1843 Scrooge dreams about Ali Baba and other fantastic characters including Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, a reminder of a period before the darkening of his character.¹⁴⁴ In "A Christmas Tree" a story in the book Christmas Stories Dickens says " What Barmecide justice have I done to the noble feasts wherein the set of wooden platters figured".¹⁴⁵ This refers to the Barmiki family who effectively ruled the court of the Abbasid caliphs. The term 'barmecide' is now used in literature for someone who offers illusory benefits. It is derived from the story of

¹⁴¹Peter L.Caracciolo, ed., introduction, The Arabian Nights in English Literature (London: Macmillan, 1988) 22. Henceforth Nights.

¹⁴²Michael Slater "Dickens in Wonderland" Nights ed. Peter Caracciolo, 133,134,136,140.

¹⁴³Charles Dickens, The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit 2 vols.(London: Chapman 1911) 88.

¹⁴⁴Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol (London: Minster, 1970) 44.

¹⁴⁵Charles Dickens, Christmas Stories 2 vols. (London: Chapman & Hall n.d.) 7.

the "Barber's Sixth Brother", in which a Barmiki offers a beggar an illusory meal, and the beggar continues the charade.

In The Haunted House Dickens also writes about children who decide to play at having a seraglio, "The other creature assented warmly. He had no notion of respectability, neither had I. It was the custom of the East, it was the way of the good Caliph Haroun Alraschid". Then the narration gives an amusing account of how the charade commenced with Mesrour, the Black for the Hareem, refusing to prostrate himself before the Caliph or to call him the Commander of the Faithful, and instead of saying "Bismillah! said Hallelujah! always".¹⁴⁶ Dickens also makes use of descriptive terms taken from the Arabian Nights including 'genie' and 'smoke' in Dombey and Son of 1847,¹⁴⁷ as well as in Great Expectations of 1860.¹⁴⁸ The incomplete Mystery of Edwin Drood of 1870 begins with a colourful hallucinatory description of an Ottoman potentate's procession to his Palace: "Ten thousand scimitars flash in the sunlight, and thrice ten thousand dancing-girls strew flowers".¹⁴⁹ This description may have been meant to contrast drastically with the bleak setting of the opening scene. The description of impalings undertaken at the behest of Turkish sultans may also provide a vehicle for a sense of foreboding about what will ensue in the consequent issues. In Hard Times Dickens turns to a particularly popular story, Ali Baba and writes of

¹⁴⁶Charles Dickens, Christmas Stories 2 vols. (London: Chapman & Hall n.d.) 294, 296, 297.

¹⁴⁷Charles Dickens, Dealing With the Firm of Dombey and Son Wholesale, Retail, and for Exportation 2 vols.(London: Chapman & Hall, 1911) 204.

¹⁴⁸Charles Dickens, Great Expectations (London: Chapman, 1911) 363.

¹⁴⁹Charles Dickens, The Mystery of Edwin Drood (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972) 2.

Morgiana and her dealing with the forty thieves.¹⁵⁰ The Arabian Nights is one of those stories which the Gradgrind children are forbidden to read, a privation which, in Dickens view warps their characters. In David Copperfield of 1849, on the other hand the Arabian Nights is listed amongst the books David read as a child and says they did him no harm.¹⁵¹ Dickens regarded the reading of such books as part of a training for true humanity.¹⁵²

According to Leonée Ormond, for Dickens and other writers, the Arabian Nights recalled a happy childhood before misery entered their lives. Thackeray unlike Coleridge who was frightened by it, enjoyed the Arabian Nights. He shared an affinity for the eighteenth century with Robert Louis Stevenson and Thackeray in his novels set in the eighteenth century, Esmond and The Virginians, used the artistic device of narrators and frame tales like those in the Arabian Nights. Stevenson was to do the same in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and the Master of Ballantrae. As is the case in the Arabian Nights, Thackeray's Vanity Fair does not have a hero, but he describes the Arabian Nights characters as being as important as heroes. As he was particularly aware of disillusionment and disappointment Thackeray also used the description of Barmaceide banquets in his works.¹⁵³

Charlotte Brontë, also makes frequent references to books of the Arabian Nights and to the fascinating quality of Arabian tales in Jane Eyre. Similarly, her sister Emily refers in Wuthering Heights to impersonating an Arab Merchant, and

¹⁵⁰Charles Dickens, Hard Times (London: Everyman 1992) 20.

¹⁵¹Charles Dickens, The Personal History of David Copperfield 2 vols.(London:Chapman) 66.

¹⁵²Leonée Ormond, personal interview, 10 March 1997.

¹⁵³Leonée Ormond, "Cayenne and Cream Tarts: W.M. Thackeray and R.L. Stevenson" Nights ed. Peter Caracciolo. 178-195,

to the idea that Heathcliff's mother might have been a rich Indian Queen. Reference to the Arabian Nights was almost universal among the great Victorian novelists. At the opening of Adam Bede, of 1859, George Eliot also employed similar eastern devices as others when describing an Egyptian sorcerer who forecasts the future by gazing through a drop of ink; and by having Captain Donnithorne express his gratitude to Adam Bede by saying that "I used to think if ever I was a rich sultan, I would make Adam my grand-vizier".¹⁵⁴

The expectations of writers travelling to eastern countries other than Turkey were also influenced by reading the Arabian Nights. John William Kaye wrote about people who came to India having a preconceived notion of its splendour and were disappointed when they came to Madras to find that it was not composed of palaces like those described in the Arabian Nights.¹⁵⁵ Allen Grant, in The Tents of Shem described a Moorish house as "the sort of home one sees in ones fancy in the Arabian Nights but never hopes to come across in this prosaic world".¹⁵⁶ John Buchan as well wrote about eastern names that rang in his head like tunes, Khiva, Bokhara, Samarkand and were the goal of many boyish dreams, born of clandestine suppers and the Arabian Nights".¹⁵⁷ In an early story, Beyond The Pale, Kipling tells of an Englishman in India who responded to a laugh from behind a grated window and, knowing that the old Arabian Nights are still a good guide, goes towards it and is not disappointed. This encounter leads to many

¹⁵⁴George Eliot, Adam Bede (Edinburgh: Blackwood, n.d) 3, 89.

¹⁵⁵John William Kaye, Long Engagements: A Tale of the Affghan Rebellion (London: Chapman, 1846) 39, 105. Henceforth Long Engagements.

¹⁵⁶Allen Grant, The Tents of Shem 3 vols. (London: Windus, 1889) 2: 44.

¹⁵⁷John Buchan, The Half-Hearted (London: Isbister, 1900) 294.

clandestine meetings between the Englishman and a young Indian widow sequestered behind the walls, until the dangerous liason is brutally ended and the woman's 'marigold' hands are cut off as a punishment.¹⁵⁸ Kipling's description of the colour acquired by the palms as a result of the application of henna, a vanity of eastern women, and this reference is unique and particularly apt. In the story, Kipling suggests that Europeans should avoid straying into situations which they may not understand properly, and where they may do untold damage. By going into the dark gulley where Biseaa lives, Trejago crosses an imaginary (but important) line between east and west.

The references to the Arabian Nights in European fiction are entertaining on the basis of artistic licence and make interesting reading. According to Muhsin Jassim Ali the popularity of the Nights in Europe also derived from its threefold appeal, from its pictures of social manners, its display of universal traits as well as from the machinery of its plots.¹⁵⁹ However it is irresponsible to use the Arabian Nights as a basis for understanding Oriental life; as happened in an article on British Foreign policy in the Quarterly Review which, explaining the rise of Mehmet Ali in Egypt said: "Those who have not read the Arabian Nights Entertainment, or who read them only as the fables of Scheherazade, and not as what they are- an accurate picture of Eastern manners,-can hardly comprehend the sudden elevations of Oriental life, whether under the Shahs, the Caliphs, or the

¹⁵⁸Rudyard Kipling, Plain Tales from the Hills (London: Macmillan, 1954) 172. Henceforth Plain Tales.

¹⁵⁹Muhsin Jassim Ali, Sheherzade in England (Washington: Three Continents, 1981) 14.

Porte".¹⁶⁰ It is ironic that all these inaccurate perceptions were based upon a collection of stories of disputed origin. This proliferation of negative images resulted in commentators restoring balance. Hawari compares Galland's final work to a manuscript which Galland used and concludes that he supplied much of the glamour of the Nights himself and that it is crammed with material that is alien to its Arabic original and which "comes from another world - that of Galland's learning". Galland also digressed from the text because of his inability to grasp the meaning of portions of the Arabic. Reviewing a new translation of the Nights based on the same source Antonia S. Byatt recently came to the same conclusion when she said that much of what the western readers think of as the essential Arabian Nights is in fact apocryphal or inauthentic.¹⁶¹

ANTIPATHY

Antipathy towards Muslims amongst other nations found its way into literature throughout the nineteenth century. Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859) in Confessions of an English Opium Eater of 1826 compares the pleasure he derives from listening to music under the effect of opium with the pleasure a supposedly inferior Turk would experience in a similar situation. Then De Quincey retracts his comparison for he thinks he honours the Barbarians too much by supposing them capable of any pleasures approaching the intellectual ones of an Englishman. This was because he considered music both an intellectual and sensual pleasure whose

¹⁶⁰Quarterly Review vol.67 no. 133 (December 1840-March 1841): 267

¹⁶¹The Sunday Times (17 Dec 1995) Books: 9

effect depended on the listener's capabilities.¹⁶² This patronising attitude was a continuation of a trend promoted by the example of James Morier. After his retirement from government service Morier wrote Hajji Baba of Isfahan of 1824 which became popular as an Oriental Gil Blas and went into several editions. The Persian Ambassador of the time objected vociferously to the satire implicit in Hajji Baba which was based on the experiences of the first Persian Ambasssador to England. In the advertisement to the second edition the writer even explains that he was given the journal of Hajji Baba who was the aide of the same Persian Ambassador. He met Hajji Baba by chance in Tocat where he had stopped for a rest, when Hajji Baba's servant asked him to meet his master who was undergoing treatment and needed cheering up. To show his appreciation of his friend's efforts in curing him Hajji Baba gave him his journal in order that he should publish it. The writer was most pleased and, after editing the text, published it as Hajji Baba of Ispahan. Then ensues a picaresque tale reminiscent of the occidental version of Arabian Nights.

The narrator says that Hajji Baba's journal, though based on fact, lacked the scrupulous regard for truth found in the work of an European writer. Continuing on this note Morier differentiates nations into those who wear hats and those who wear beards and says that they will hold each other's stories as improbable until a more general intercourse of common life takes place between them.¹⁶³ In Hajji Baba Morier confesses that the face of the sick Agha was so woefully pale in

¹⁶²De Quincey, 105.

¹⁶³James Morier, The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan (London: Dent, n.d.) 7. Henceforth Hajji Baba.

contrast to his beard that, though he was a Turk, he could not help but feel some pity for him.¹⁶⁴

As a record Hajji Baba is surprisingly devoid of the prejudices blatantly described in the preface to the standard edition of Morier's Ayesha. Morier claimed that changes had taken place in the east as a result of the interaction with Europe and that these changes had occurred within ten years of the writing of the book. He says that the Turk of the past, who believed that he was polluted by the touch of a Giaour, was now dancing in the Hanover Square Rooms. He rejoiced that, as a result of these contacts, the great lie represented by Islam would eventually be found out.¹⁶⁵ According to Morier, the author of a book in which history and fiction are combined must specify the quantity of each so that facts can be preserved and fiction thrown away.¹⁶⁶ Morier made this stipulation in the preface to his novel Zohrab of 1832 which he described as a work having a preponderance of historical content. Morier explains that the main characters of the story were actuated by noble principles which could never have been produced by the doctrines of the Qur'an but only by an excellence in human nature which supersedes false religion, and acts as though it were guided by the right one. Morier elaborates the point with the uncharacteristic observation that there were Muslims in the east and particularly in Turkey "whose conduct in life would have done credit to Christianity". However the villain of Zohrab is the despicable Shah,

¹⁶⁴David Morier introduction, Photo the Suliote 14.

¹⁶⁵Morier, preface Hajji Baba 1.

¹⁶⁶James Morier, preface Zohrab the Hostage 3 vols. (London: Bentley, 1832) 1:4. Henceforth Zohrab.

a zealous promoter of his religion.¹⁶⁷ He usurps power by initially killing his brother, the legitimate King, and appropriating the rightful heirs, his nephew and niece Amima. The latter is a corruption of Amina which was the name of the Prophet's mother. In true Machiavellian fashion the Shah disposes of a neighbouring ruler who had helped him to attain power. However poetic justice is done when Zohrab, the son of this former friend, falls into the hands of the evil Shah who tries to make political capital out of his hostage. Zohrab escapes and a series of adventures is set in motion, so that eventually Amima is also rescued. The story is woven around the love between Zohrab and Amima which emanates from a chance encounter between them and survives the villainous machinations of the Shah in his determination to maintain power. The story could be representative of unacceptable behaviour by a despot in any part of the world, and during any period. It is unfortunate that Morier did not follow his own specification and clarify the division between fact and fiction. That division would have made the novel more credible if Morier had not reduced it to an indictment of Islam in general.

Another Oriental novel, Martin Toutround, was originally written in French and translated by Morier himself in 1849. The hero, Martin, in search of a wife, visits an Indian "Nabob" whose daughter is an heiress. He notes contemptuously that the monkey-like man, could scarcely be called a member of the human race, and that the daughter is so dark that she could not be called a lady. The English

¹⁶⁷Morier, preface, Zohrab 1: 8, 49.

stepmother of the girl balks at calling her daughter.¹⁶⁸ The attitude of the stepmother would probably have been the same even if the girl had been of her own race. However the described reaction is reflective of the general squeamishness, felt by those who are attracted to partners of other nationalities, but here they exhibit a different attitude concerning the families because they are manifestations of a different culture.

A corresponding attitude was to be expressed by J.W. Sherer, the son of a senior Bengal civil servant. He served in various government posts in India and rose to the Indian Bench before retiring. He wrote numerous books on India including A Princess of Islam of 1897. He continues the trend when the character of George asserts that the ascendancy of the western over the eastern character was the secret that had enabled Europeans, with every other disadvantage, to override those Asiatics with whom they had been brought into contact.¹⁶⁹ The novel, based in India, gives a good depiction of Muslims even while declaring scorn for the narrators. The novel begins with an aberration of Islam in which George, an Englishman, is asked to marry a Muslim Princess by her uncle, the nawab of an Indian state. In Islamic terms this is very unusual and, if it occurs, it does so against the wishes of the relatives and in defiance of religious practice. After marrying, George leaves his Indian bride at home and goes away to England. There he marries again and the abandoned Indian wife dies after hearing about his new bride.

¹⁶⁸James Morier, Martin Tout Rond, or, Adventures of a Frenchman in London (London: Bentley, 1852) 164-5.

¹⁶⁹J.W. Sherer, A Princess of Islam (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1897) 5.

A similar revulsion, but now related to the inhabitants of Afghanistan, was expressed by the writer Lillias Hamilton (1894-1897) who served as a court physician to the Amir of Afghanistan. In this case the western writer could also have been echoing indigenous attitudes of racial superiority amongst the various tribes populating the country. This subdivision of Afghanistan has continued into the present with factions belonging to different ethnic origins fighting each other. The reviewer of this book for the Athenaeum recommended the work as essential reading for all British administrators in India. Hamilton's The Viziers Daughter of 1900 is set in Kabul and has as its heroine Gul Begum, the princess of a rebellious faction, which is eventually subdued. It also contains a portrait of the potentate whom Hamilton served. Hamilton's aversion to cultures other than her own is more obvious in her description of life in Afghanistan in A Vizier's Daughter where she says that it is a country without joy and that a crowd of girls seen there were hideous but quite unconscious of this. Hamilton describes the spokesman of a group of Hazaras as being distinguished from the rest only by being uglier than they.¹⁷⁰

In comparison to these writers were Fraser, Kaye, W.D.Arnold and Kipling who, despite an inherited reserve, presented a comparatively authentic picture of the indigenous populations. Fraser, who had travelled to India, the West Indies and the Himalayas specialised in books on Persia and the east. His more accurately based fiction was considered as undistinguished and supposed to have “brought the decline of the Eastern Tale from the level to which James Morier had

¹⁷⁰Lillias Hamilton, A Vizier's Daughter a Tale of the Hazara War (London: Murray, 1900) 1,38.

taken it to in the 1820's and 1830's". His novel The Kuzzilbash of 1828 was based on a manuscript found by Fraser during his stay in India. This manuscript had been written by a close comrade of Nadir Shah's during his conquest of India. Fraser explained that his own object was to present in an amusing manner some sketches of countries and of manners little known in England and to give a description of a period of considerable interest in Asiatic history. He did this with considerable accuracy and realism, but, following in the wake of Morier's highly imaginative depictions, his mundane and comparatively authentic details were unappreciated and regarded as less pleasingly exotic. Even the name of The Kuzzilbash was debated as it conveyed little idea of the book's contents to western readers; one bookseller complaining that people thought that this was a cookery book. Undeterred, Fraser went on to write The Persian Adventurer of 1830, as a sequel to The Kuzzilbash, and Ali Nemroo of 1842, the tale of a Bakhtiaree adventurer.¹⁷¹ Then, in a preface to another novel, The Dark Falcon of 1844, Fraser states that on this occasion his object has been to present in a more attractive shape the repulsive details of certain facts of Persian History. This novel was set in the time of the struggle between the Kajar and the Zend families, when the country was convulsed in bloodshed. It was based on historical facts, and employed historical as well as contemporary personages.¹⁷²

Similarly John William Kaye's Long Engagements 1845 contains a knowledgeable and matter of fact account of the Raj. The novel is concerned with

¹⁷¹James Fraser, preface The Persian Adventurer: Being the Sequel of "The Kuzzilbash," 3 vols.(London: Bentley, 1830) 1:6,5.

the love affairs of the Balfour sisters who go to visit their brother and his wife in Calcutta. The setting shifts between the Afghan war and the peace of Calcutta. According to Kaye some people derived their information about India from bad novels and worse comedies. Kaye's statement that the empire of a Mohammedan monarch is not one of democracy, unlike that of the British, and that an insurrection affects the British more than it does the Afghans was not appropriate to the centuries old fiercely democratic culture of the indigenous tribes. Kaye, was not unaware of this feature, as, in discussions of the Afghan war held during after dinner drinks, comments are made on the savagery of the opponents but, at the same time, their democratic independence is also discussed with comparisons to the Scots. An Afghan woman is even shown to administer to the wounded Carrington before he is put to death. The Afghans are described as fierce Mahomedans only once and that is towards the end of the account of the conflict. In another statement of the virtues of the Afghans, an Afghan servant is depicted as being faithful to his English master till the end.¹⁷³

Following in the trend of these novelists was William Delafield Arnold, the second son of Thomas Arnold and brother of Matthew. His Oakfield; or, Fellowship in the East of 1854 is a militantly moral novel which the East India Company strongly resented. This book was a critical comment on British rule in India and on the futility of missionary efforts, yet Arnold also unconsciously implies an attitude of superiority, for example when he says that a comparison of

¹⁷²James Fraser, preface The Dark Falcon a Tale of the Attruck 4 vols. (London:Bentley,1844)1:5.

¹⁷³J.W. Kaye, Long Engagements 319, 255.

Dak bungalows in India with the inns of England cannot be justified.¹⁷⁴ In this novel Oakfield leaves Oxford without sufficient vocation to enter the church. Instead he enrolls as an officer in the military forces of the East India Company. In Hajepoor, Oakfield is revolted by the 'ribaldry' of his fellow officers and boycotts the mess. His example converts the young Vernon, who dies piously after a river accident. Oakfield goes up country to Allahbad, where he becomes friendly with a sagacious magistrate, Mr Middleton. He refuses to be provoked into a duel by the local mess bully, Stafford, who speaks coarsely to Middleton's daughter Fanny. Oakfield is provoked, however, into horsewhipping Stafford's insolent emissary and is court-martialled but exonerated. Oakfield participates in the Sikh Wars of 1846. Later, he becomes a magistrate, administering justice to the natives of whom he has a higher opinion than most Englishmen. He dies after six years exhausting work raising the moral tone of the colony.

The efforts of these writers to present a more accurate account of life in Russia, India and Afghanistan culminated in the work of Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) celebrated as the chief writer of the Raj, and still affectionately regarded by indigenes as essentially expressing the Raj at its best. Alastair Fowler considers that Kipling's sympathies showed that he was as little of an imperialist as Conrad.¹⁷⁵ Edward Said indicates another point of view when he says that it is natural for Kipling to be assessed in different terms by Indian and British commentators.¹⁷⁶ At Kipling's birth British India was at its zenith, even the setting

¹⁷⁴W.D.Arnold Oakfield; or, Fellowship in the East 2 ed. 2 vols. (London Longmans, 1854) 1:18.

¹⁷⁵Alastair Fowler, A History of English Literature (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987) 337.

¹⁷⁶Edward Said, Empire & Culture (London: Chatto, 1993) 163.

up of Congress was the idea of a British civil servant who believed that educated Indians were too few to represent a threat. Changes of course took place and the Agha Khan of the time, who strove for Indian Independence, wrote at a later date, about the "narrow intolerant imperialistic outlook associated with Kipling's name".¹⁷⁷ This criticism may have been accentuated by some of Kipling's early verse like The Letter of Halim the Potter:

The Prophet (blessed in Allah) writes;- "Take heed
Because ye are the Chosen, yet all skill
Concentrates not in Islam. Swine and dogs
Have knowledge of the weather more than ye-
Learn from them, praising Allah!
--- I doubt not that the drugs
Of them who know not Islam (-Read again
The Prophet's sentence, though thou knewest it
Before I knew the platter from the cup--)¹⁷⁸

Thomas Pinney considers that Kipling's stories and newspaper articles combined to express a sort of Orientalism, a conviction that the natives are not suited to western forms, together with a very western belief that only the British knew what was best for India.¹⁷⁹ Jasper Griffin, in his lectures, was to express the same opinion, that for Kipling the Empire offered a civilising government, represented by the wolves in The Jungle Book who were contrasted with the natives as monkeys or *Bandar-log* who were incapable of order or civilisation.¹⁸⁰ This attitude still exists in post-colonial South West Asian society where it has been transferred into the assumed superiority of civil servants or others generally educated in schools with English as a medium of instruction as compared to those

¹⁷⁷Katherine Moore, Kipling and the White Man's Burden (London: Taber, 1968) 87.

¹⁷⁸Rudyard Kipling, Early Verse by Rudyard Kipling 1879-1889 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986) 270. Henceforth Early Verse.

¹⁷⁹Thomas Pinney, ed. Kipling's India (London: Macmillan 1986) 20.

from schools which teach in the national language. In an early story, Lispeth, Kipling writes about a girl of rustic Indian parentage who was baptised when she was five weeks old, raised by the Chaplain and his wife and retained as a maid. He records the injustices inflicted on her when she declares her instant love for a wounded Englishman whom she has brought back for medical aid and nursed back to health. As Lispeth had done this she declares that he will be the one she will marry. This embarrasses the Parson and his wife and they think that it would take a great deal of Christianity to wipe out such uncivilised eastern instincts as falling in love at first sight. They tend to humour the girl and conscript the invalid to continue the charade. They only tell the brutal truth to the girl after the Englishman has gone away. When she is told that she cannot marry him because he is made of a superior clay and is engaged to an English girl, Lispeth recants, impetuously declares that all of the English are liars and returns to her parent's people.¹⁸¹ The moral of the tale is laudable, notwithstanding the fact that Indian girls of all religions are very demure in their attitude to marriage, and would seldom have behaved as depicted.

NOBLE SAVAGE

That antipathy towards the Muslim, to which reference has been made in earlier pages of this thesis, was so great that in most of those romances in which the major character happened to be a Muslim, he or she was almost always found to be a Christian by origin. To preserve the class structure such a person was

¹⁸⁰Jasper Griffin, A Critical Spirit: the view from Oxford (Karachi: Hamdard, 1982) 22.

usually also discovered to be the offspring of some exalted nobility, as happens in the case of Edgar R. Burroughs Tarzan. Morier's heroine, "Ayesha," who has a Turkish name but a Christian soul, is described as : "being so beautiful that it is a great pity that she belongs to the Turks when she should have belonged to the Franks". It eventually turns out that she does indeed descend from the Franks.¹⁸² Writing Ayesha in 1834, Morier juxtaposed Frank and Turk to give himself ample opportunities for creating scenes that would be highly popular with a contemporary audience. Bringing the novel closer to home would make it more intensely felt. Thus Ayesha's father was depicted as an Englishman who had settled in Athens so that his child would grow under Attic influences. Other characters include the Greek Zabetta and her boyfriend, Suleiman, who run away from their employers with the baby Ayesha. They raise the child as a Muslim in order to appease Suleiman's conscience and name her Ayesha. Osmond, the hero, is the quintessential Englishman of the age. He undertakes the journey through Turkey, sees Ayesha while passing through Kars, and falls in love with her. He decides to extend his stay in order to see more of her. Osmond is aided in this endeavour by Zabetta who arranges for them to meet on the roof terrace, where a Muezzin sees the couple alone and raises the alarm. An investigation is launched and Osmond is subjected to a religious debate in which he fails. He is given the option of conversion or death by the mufti. The Pasha, who is sympathetic towards Osmond, arranges a sporting event as a distraction in order to allow him to escape. Osmond flees and seeks refuge with Cara Bey, the villain, a concentrated essence

¹⁸¹Kipling, Plain Tales 5.

of all deceits and tyrannies, cruelties and loathsome sensualities. He exemplifies all the wickedness which the traveller is anticipated to encounter on a journey through Turkey and Persia. Cara Bey, a Yezidi chief, treacherously decides to abduct Ayesha himself and to imprison and eventually poison Osmond. However Osmond manages to rescue Ayesha from the castle with the help of Russian soldiers. Many adventures ensue but the story ends with Ayesha's, baptism and her resumption of her original name, Mary. The preface to the second edition, together with the early chapters, are full of attacks on Muslim characters which disappear in the second volume and only surface again towards the end.

The same discriminating concept had already emerged in John Keats' (1795-1821) account of Otho the emperor of Germany. Otho The Great overcomes a rebellion by his nobles and his son. During the battle Otho is protected by an "unknown" warrior dressed as an Arab, who eventually turns out to be his son. When the identity of Prince Ludolph is discovered, the anomaly of the approach is exposed. The deaths caused on the battlefield are considered excusable, simply because they were caused by a German and not by an Arab.

Still give me leave to wonder that my Prince
Ludolph, and the swift Arab are the same,
Still to rejoice that 'twas a German arm
Death doing in a turban'd masquerade.¹⁸³

Similarly in Murray's novel Hassan of 1857, the hero is abandoned as a baby when his father places him in the arms of Khadija, a Muslim woman who was sitting near a pyramid and mourning for her dead infant. Hassan eventually grows up to discover his true identity which proves to be of Arab nobility. As the story

¹⁸²James Morier, preface Ayesha 35.

develops Khadija accuses her husband, the Sheikh, of not having adopted Hassan according to religious law. In a note to this Murray erroneously adds that Mohammedan law acknowledges that an adopted child has full rights of inheritance.¹⁸⁴ The theme reached its apogee in the next century with E.M. Hull's novel The Sheikh of 1919 (written in what was later to be known as the Mills and Boon style). The romantic role of the sheikh was also to be indelibly printed on the minds of cinema audiences, when it was portrayed by Rudolph Valentino in a film of the same name. Here the dilemma concerns an Englishwoman, Diana, and her refusal to leave her captor, the Arab Sheikh, because she loves him. A resolution is reached when it is discovered that he is actually the son of Lord Glencarryl. His mother, a lady of Spanish nobility, had, through a terrible accident, been forced to seek refuge in the camp of Ben Hassan and gave birth to a son who was adopted by Ben Hassan and made his heir.¹⁸⁵ Both of these stories are based on non-Islamic ideas of adoption. Islam is very particular about strict observation of paternity and though a Muslim can treat anyone as a child, there is no formalised adoption and consequently no legalised inheritance.

Allen Grant's Tents Of Shem of 1889 is based around Grant's travels in Algeria and here Grant introduces the idea of jihad or holy war to provide him with an exciting plot. Tents Of Shem is replete with stereotypical terms and, though an initial effort is made at a counter argument explains how Islam does not condone force, this is later totally discarded. The novel is set in the land of the Kabyle

¹⁸³H.W.Garrod, The Poetical Works of John Keats (Oxford: Clarendon, 1958) 326.

¹⁸⁴C.A.Murray, Hassan or the Child of the Pyramid. 2 vols. (London: Parker, 1857) 16. Henceforth Hassan.

where two European men set out to explore the flora and fauna of the desert. In the process they meet a Kabyle girl who speaks English. The novel culminates with her discovering that, due to the machinations of a vile uncle, her father had to flee from England and seek refuge with the Kabyle to escape ignominy. She is discovered to be an aristocratic heiress who was always a Christian but was unaware of it. Meriem starts out as very loyal to her adopted people but turns against them when they plan to murder English men, women and children after declaring jihad against the infidel. Initially the book appears to defend the Muslim faith but this approach soon disappears and we find that Meriem and her father denounce Islam. He is "outwardly compelled to conform to the distasteful rites and usages of Islam".¹⁸⁶ The Kabyle maidens are described in Grecian terms and are said to reflect their Roman ancestry. One of the characters in the book, Kinglake, agrees with the poet Alfred Tennyson's appraisal of the native as inferior.¹⁸⁷ The lines under discussion were from Locksley Hall:

But I count the grey barbarians lower than the
Christian child
I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our
glorious gains,
Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast with
lower pains!
Mated with squalid savage-what to me were sun or
clime?
I the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time-
188

The speaker of Locksley Hall tells how the woman he loved rejected him and married another man, something which the poet had apparently experienced.

¹⁸⁵E.M. Hull, The Sheikh (Bath: Lythway, 1919) 236-7.

¹⁸⁶Grant, 3 :246.

¹⁸⁷Grant, 1 :51.

Though Tennyson probably did not deliberately intend to be xenophobic, writing in a state of despair, he unintentionally echoed the prevailing attitude when his writer expressed those thoughts.¹⁸⁹

These examples all provide evidence of the ways in which writers of novels and poetry accepted the general complacency of the times. Even when the writers were not deliberately cultivating it, an ambivalence towards other cultures, and in particular towards Muslims, was present in their works. Thus a continuation of the cycle of the perpetuation of a contrived image rooted in theological history, which broke ground in political expediency, was fed by literature. It was immaterial whether this literature was travel writing, drama, prose, novel, or poetry, as the idea of Islam and the Muslim was expressed there. At worst, it was denigration, levelling into a patronising attitude, at best it culminated in well meant confusion. Whether this image was formed through interaction with the literature and cultures of the east or was based on fantasy, the result was the same. The Muslims and their religion were an unacceptable entity, seen either as too frivolous or as too sanguinary. This attitude has trickled down to the present as most of the image makers, both Muslim and non-Muslim, were raised on many of the works discussed here, many of which fall within the repertoire of acknowledged classics.

¹⁸⁸Ricks, Tennyson 698.

¹⁸⁹Leonée Ormond, personal interview, 15 March 1997.

CHAPTER IV - CULTURAL BACKGROUND

The nineteenth century in Britain was very productive in all fields of the arts. The technological developments of the Industrial revolution made a great contribution to this vigorousness. Just as the Empire knew no bounds, neither did the creative faculty of its people which also manifested itself in music, theatre and the arts of the Age. The contact with eastern cultures, which were by now lagging behind, did much to bolster the national psyche. After the seventeenth century, which had witnessed a proliferation of eastern influence, there was again a considerable impetus in representations of the east. The only difference was that in the seventeenth century the acquisition of new lands was beginning and great diplomacy was required in their depiction. By the nineteenth century the Empire and national confidence was at its zenith, and Britain could assert its superiority. New elements and themes were more accessible and, departing from the strictures of the past, artistic expression was unbridled. The British Empire could make the world to its desire, and it did so with gusto and considerable xenophobia. One thing remained unchanged and that was the manipulated underlying hostility towards Islam. The general ambivalence towards Muslims that was felt in political circles, and recorded in literature, was also disseminated to the public through wider cultural avenues.

MUSIC

A brief survey of the historical interrelation of east and west in the field of music will provide a framework for understanding this process. According to

Henry Farmer, in Historical Facts for the Arabian Musical Influence (1970), music along with arithmetic, geometry and astronomy, was part of the quadrivium course taught from the earliest times in the Muslim world. Music and singing were essential to daily life, and the courts of caliphs, sultans and amirs encouraged it. Farmer states that the political contact with the Muslims which began in the eighth century also affected the culture of Spain and western Europe in many ways. This filtration of eastern musical influence came through roving Arab minstrels and led mainly to the promotion of instrumentalists. On a more audible and visible level this interaction produced a substantial increase in the number of instruments which were included in the martial bands of Europe. A parallel development of practical theory also took place. This may have been contributed to by the twenty-one volumes of the *Kitab al-Aghani*, written by Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani (d.967). Apart from this collection numerous books by other Muslim theorists, who are better known as scientists, also influenced medieval Europe considerably. Unfortunately very few of the Latin translations of these original Arab and Greek works, are extant. This loss may have been the result of the pre-Renaissance Christian church's efforts to destroy the "infidel" influences evidenced in music. Al-Masudi, while writing about the Byzantine empire, said that the science of music was thrown out with the advent of Christianity. From the sixth to the tenth century the Church as a whole also despised learning. Despite this dearth of literary records on the subject of the development of musical theory,¹⁹⁰ Farmer argues fervently for the Arabian origin of the theory of music as opposed to the generally accepted

¹⁹⁰Farmer, 62, 18, 12, 26, 43, 69, 159.

Greek origin. Farmer's theory is interesting as in conjunction with evidence provided by Muslim writers it effectively challenges the myth that music was proscribed in Islam. In fact the contrary is observed and a rich Muslim musical heritage is depicted, on which much of western classical theory of music was based. This musical and cultural development of the Muslims received an irretrievable setback with the sacking of Baghdad in 1258 by the Mongols.¹⁹¹ It is interesting to observe that a culture over whose contribution to classical musical theory academics argue in the west, would eventually itself be depicted as culturally degenerate.

As the western countries emerged from their Dark Ages and achieved political control over the Muslims, they also began to assert their cultural superiority. This process was to be so successful that eventually the assumed sense of superiority became second nature. It was displayed in a letter written by Charles Lamb (1775-1869) to his friend Manning, (on 26th February 1808) giving him all the news. While describing an opera, Kais (1808) by Isaac Brandon, Lamb demonstrates the continuing triumphalism on the subject of the eastern style when he remarks: "Tis all about Eastern manners; it would just suit you. It describes the wild Arabs, wandering Egyptians, lying dervishes, and all that sort of people, to a hair".¹⁹² This attitude was to be recorded years later when Bernard Shaw wrote under the pseudonym of "Corno de Basseto" about the performance of Verdi's Äida presented at Covent Garden in July 1888: "Signor Manicelli conducted the court and temple scenes barbarically, evidently believing that the ancient Egyptians

¹⁹¹Farmer, 263.

were a tribe of savages, instead of, as far as one can ascertain, considerably more advanced than the society now nightly contemplating in 'indispensable evening dress' the back of Signor Manicelli's head".¹⁹³

An interest in the depiction of the east, similar to the situation relating to eastern politics and literature, also existed in the staging of artistic musical representations. This was evidenced in the successive staging of such Oriental themes as found in Handel's Siroe, Re Di Persia. This has a complex plot based on pre-Islamic Persian history and was premiered on 17 February 1728 at King's Theatre, Haymarket. The first complete and staged production since Handel's days was put on from 23-26 November 1993 at the Britten Theatre in the Royal College of Music.

The Indian Bayaderes, Hindu temple dancers, also inflamed the imagination of the public when they performed in Europe. Repeated performances of Bayaderes took place from 1810 and continue into present times. Weber's Oberon, was staged very successfully at Covent Garden in 1826 and the composer was there to take the applause. The poster bill of the performance was suitably embellished with pictures of fairies, Franks, Arabians and Tunisians. This show was followed by an Aladdin opera and Oberon was performed again in the evening.¹⁹⁴ In Oberon Weber uses a genuine Arabian melody for the chorus of the

¹⁹²E. V. Lucas, The Life of Charles Lamb 2 vols. (London: Methuen, 1921) 351.

¹⁹³George B. Shaw, London Music in 1888-89 as Heard by Corno Di Bassetto (London: Constable, 1937) 37.

¹⁹⁴Playbill, G. Enthoven Collection, Theatre Museum Covent Garden.

harem to sing to his Rezia,"....which was intended to sound Arabian, grotesque, and weird and it does achieve precisely that effect".¹⁹⁵

With a few exceptions the depiction of the Muslims found in the mass media, whether musical or theatrical, were grotesque, contrived and as ill-informed as possible. This set up a vicious circle of perpetuating the stereotype which is still in evidence today. It was very easy to amalgamate the disparate Muslim world as a single entity, and to freely interchange the characteristics of one nation with another with very little detriment to the purpose. This was done freely in Petipa's ballet La Peri when it was staged at Drury Lane on 30 September 1843; so much so that even the critics were divided amongst themselves as to the nationality of the characters. The reviewers variously describe the Oriental hero as Syrian, Turk, or Persian. The production imported from the Academie Royale of Paris, with the famous Carlotta Grisi and Monsieur Petipa, in the same year was replete with odalisques. An adaptation of Byron's The Corsair was performed as a ballet for the first time in the Britain on 30 September 1844 at the Drury Lane Theatre. It was subsequently staged in 1848, and again in 1856 at Her Majesty's Theatre, after having premiered in Paris at the Theatre Imperial De l' Opera and then at the Victoria Theatre in May 1859. It was to prove very popular as a ballet and continues to be performed up to modern times.

Attempts at putting forward a positive image of the Muslims were also made, but these proved unpopular and infrequent. An example was found in the attitude of Voltaire who had gone against the norm of the time when he tried to

¹⁹⁵Alfred Einstein, Music in the Romantic Era (London: Dent, 1947) 57.

put forward a more sympathetic view of the Muslims in the first staging of Zaire in Paris on 13 August 1732. In spite of the fact that the heroine renounces the Islamic faith, however, the critics of an 1890 revival found the play too sympathetic to the Muslim Sultan. Mozart fared better with Die Entführung Aus Dem Serail, when it was performed at Drury Lane in 1841. Mozart's opera is striking for its introduction of a merciful pasha who sets an example of generosity to his Christian prisoners. It restores a sense of balance to the stereotypical portrayal of the villainous Muslim, and is well received till the present. When it was presented at Covent Garden in 1827 the playbill listed the cast as Mahometans, Greeks and Foreigners. It seems that Muslims and Greeks were equally well known to the general public as the main protagonists, while the rest of the world was considered as alien.

However, according to John Mackenzie, in music and theatre even the late seventeenth century sometimes portrayed the noble Turkish ruler as a form of wish-fulfillment. The ballet La Source was performed at the Theatre Imperial De L Opera in Paris on 12 November 1866. It had a large cast with Muslim names, and featured a mountainous scene. It was too popular that it was produced in Italy as La Sorgente and in Germany as Naila. Imperialism was now also evident in French operas such as Delibes' Lakmé,¹⁹⁶ which was introduced in 1883 and performed at the London Gaiety Theatre in 1885. This was an unusual work with its French view of the Indians and the British, but it also succumbed to the usual mixing of Hindu and Muslim characters and dress. Perhaps inspired by

their natural colonialism, French composers turned to exoticism as in Lé Desert and Lalla Roukh by Félicien David (1810-1876) or Saint-Saëns, Samson and Delilah, Suite Algérienne, and Fifth Piano Concerto. Added to these were Auber's Le Domino noir, Bizet's Carmen, Charbiers' España & Debussy's Ibéria.¹⁹⁷ Bizet's Djamileh, a one-act opéra comique, is a variation of the Scheherazade idea in which the slave has one month to prove her love to Haroun. The depiction of the palace at sunset as Haroun reclines, smoking, is an authentic counterpart to Victor Hugo's Les Orientales or to Ingres' Odalisques.¹⁹⁸

Reflecting the drama on the political scene, the costumes all of these extravaganzas were also provided with "a repertoire of musical orientationalism, a collective category that rode roughshod over ethnic distinctions so that Arabic, Tartar, and Indian music all appeared interchangeable; making it inevitable that "The riches of authentic Oriental music necessarily collapsed to a meagre residue so as to be integratable at all into the European tonal system".¹⁹⁹ Just as it was difficult to distinguish what nationality was being presented on stage because of the amalgamation of all kinds of costumes; similarly the music of heterogeneous countries was lumped together. Mackenzie is able to discern a positive aspect and argues that these perceptions of the east, however artificial, produced a genuine revolution, major technical change and an alluring artistic world. According to him spectacle and Russian theatre helped the audience to feel less inhibited and perhaps

¹⁹⁶Myles B.Foster, History of the Philharmonic Society of London:1813-1912 (London:Lane,1912) 5.

¹⁹⁷Rey M.Longyear, Nineteenth-Century Romanticism in Music 2nd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973) 215.

¹⁹⁸Gerald Abraham, ed. Romanticism (1830-1890) (Oxford: Oxford.UP, 1990) 379.

led to a more constructive merging of the east and west. Félicien David visited the east and instituted the Oriental style carried on by Bizet, Delibes, and Saint-Saëns amongst others. Saint-Saëns even saw himself as revealing the east to the west in a sympathetic light.

The confusion regarding musical productions may be more readily understood as, being a universal language, music could synthesise more easily, especially when there was hundreds of years of intermingling amongst the cultures. This is evidenced in Hungarian Music of the nineteenth century where it is virtually impossible to separate the Hungarian, Turkish, and gypsy elements, a result of the fact that Hungary was occupied by the Turks for nearly two centuries and that gypsy disseminators established the Hungarian style. The vogue for Turkish music ended in the 1820s with the general European revulsion during the Greek War of Independence.²⁰⁰ However the continuous staging of Orientalist productions indicates a steady popularity evidenced in the perennial charm of Äida until the present. In the post Saidian era, unlike for Mackenzie the melodies of the Desert were genuinely Oriental but were fleshed out with European harmonies. Mackenzie also argues that the amalgamation of eastern sounds was the result of a more honourable motive, stating that composers used the east to extend the language of their art. One reason for the success of Äida, an opera created wholly by western means, may be, as Mackenzie explains, a result of Verdi's achieving an

¹⁹⁹Carl Dalhous, Nineteenth-Century Music translated from German (Berkeley: California UP, 1989) 298.

²⁰⁰Longyear, 237.

intriguing sense of exoticism in his music by using the east for this purpose.²⁰¹ Mackenzie continues that the repeated social, moral, and sexual destabilisations which matched the introduction of new musical elements later cut across the simple dividing line of contrasting cultures. In eighteenth century musical Orientalism, the imperial boot was on the other foot. It was the Ottoman empire which was feared and then accommodated. Yet there was no monolithic discourse of alterity. In the nineteenth century two projects fused the musical journey: one was to search for new orchestral colour and the other was a proto-ethnomusicological search for the intriguing melodic and rhythmic invention through which it could be exploited.²⁰² Whatever the reasons may have been, the interest in Oriental music was to continue until the present, when the idea of world music has become popular. The successful use of the Hungarian lullaby in the film The English Patient also reinforces this argument.

THEATRE

In the world of theatre at times a similar but more visibly paradoxical situation prevailed. Political expediency notwithstanding, the taste of the general populace for anything Oriental remained unabated. This was described by J.R. Planché when he took over the Olympia Theatre. His skit The Camp at the Olympic which he wrote for Alfred Wigan, was staged in 1853. The play gives a birdseye view of the conditions prevailing in 1850-1860. Planché encapsulated the requirements of his audience by whom comedy was generally preferred to tragedy

²⁰¹Mackenzie, preface, xv, xvi.

²⁰²Mackenzie, 146-147.

and while dramatic taste was both low and fickle: "Just what they like - whatever that may be - Not much to hear, and something strange to see".²⁰³ Outside the British Isles the same pattern emerged simultaneously. Whether it was Russia, France or Germany the end result was the same, only the inflections were different, as all of these countries had different spheres of influence in their colonies.

A vogue for the Circassian and the Caucasian was a marked feature of the early Victorian period. Political interests in India dictated British policy in Russia where the Foreign Office carefully monitored the movements of the legendary Avar Chechen leader, Imam Shamil's, revolt in the Caucasus, as well as of those of British soldiers secretly crossing the border from India in order to train the rebel followers. Because the uprising was crucial in containing the Russian advance towards the warm waters of the Arabian Sea, whether through Persia or the Indian sub-continent, the British Government had a more than usual concern with events. This interest was so widespread that 'A Circassian March' was composed and even the covers of the 'Scottische Reel' abounded with Arabian chargers. It was thought that both Shamil and the Algerian Abd el Kader, who rebelled against the French, conspired to revolt against western domination during the annual pilgrimage to Mecca in 1838. For once the exploits of these two Muslims were found acceptable because the two countries at the receiving end were Russia and France, both more potent and geographically closer enemies. In 1834 Abd el Kader, who opposed the French invasion in North Africa, became the central figure in many equestrian dramas and plays staged in England. Shamil was a

²⁰³Allardyce Nicoll, A History of English Drama 1660-1900 5 vols. (London: Cambridge UP,

famous opponent of the Russians, and this interest was supplemented by the heroic personalities of Shamyl and his one time lieutenant, Haji Murad. Shamyl returned the interest shown in him by writing to Queen Victoria requesting her help and by having English journals read out to him on his long marches. Russian opposition to him evolved from Catherine the Great's dream of the Cross replacing the Crescent in India, Constantinople and the Caucasus. These were all to be part of her intended revival of the Greek Empire under Russian control which was to follow the annexation of the Crimea in 1783. All of these events provided ample material for staging equestrian extravaganzas which were also to prove lucrative for their producers. Astley's Amphitheatre was a popular London venue for staging such performances and is one of the subjects described by Dickens in Sketches by Boz. It was set up by Philip Astley, a retired cavalryman, and, from 1769 it presented melodramas and equestrian displays under canvas. Astley's was visited by the Persian Ambassador on 14 May 1810 who meticulously recorded favourable impressions of the horsemanship displayed.²⁰⁴ This must have been evidenced in productions similar to the Conqueror's Steed; Karabagh or The Prophet of the Caucasus, which was staged for the seventh time at Astley's on 1 August 1842. This equestrian spectacle was based on the events of the Crimean war. It featured a gladiatorial event with wild gymnastic feats of the "Syrian Antipodean", a hall of countless mirrors, and a Russian ballet.²⁰⁵ It seems that the public's appetite for exoticism was insatiable. Abd el Kader, a favourite equestrian

1959) 5: 82, 83.

²⁰⁴Margaret M. Cloake, 232.

²⁰⁵Playbill, G. Enthoven Collection Theatre Museum Covent Garden.

event based on the legendary Algerian hero, was to feature in five dramas over the years 1837-56. The Arab of The Desert was also presented as a novelty, an equestrian comic pantomime at Astley's in February 1856. Described as not having lost one particle of its great attraction, it was approved to be played every evening until further notice. Lalla Rookh Or The Rose Of Lahore; based on Moore's poem, originated in 1846 and was staged at Her Majesty's Theatre on 11 June in 1856. The publicity described its setting, India, as a country, at that moment interesting to all Englishmen. Lalla Rookh was also presented as a popular equestrian event at Astley's on 13 June 1836. The inevitable illuminated Palm grove was advertised with "other effective incidents of grandeur", including a contest of drowning steeds.

The prime 'Orientalist' event was The Desert: Or The Imann's Daughter performed in 1847 at Drury Lane. The first night of the grand Oriental Spectacle took place on Easter Monday 5 April 1847 and the piece was said to have "correct and striking costumes". There was a programme with details of the scenery and an outline of incidents. Act I Scene I featured the Exterior Of The Grand Temple Of Mecca, irradiated by the Thousands of lamps perpetually burning around the Shrine of the Prophet. In Scene II were seen the ruins of an ancient Egyptian Temple Tower near Madina conducting by a panoramic effect to Scene III, which included The Vast Desert, and the inevitable oasis. The army of animals displayed in it consisted of twelve camels, two stupendous elephants pulling a chariot, attended by fifty horses and a whole body of camels. There was also to be an opening chorus of Allah! Allah! The seemingly innocuous description of the

Prophet's shrine at Mecca irradiated by thousands of lamps was to confirm the fabricated legends and misconception and to contribute to an ideology that was totally alien to veracity.²⁰⁶ John Mackenzie regards this play as a perfect example of positive Orientalism but for an ordinary Muslim it represents a bewildering violation of historical facts which could only lead to an incorrect image of his or her religion. This also conflicts with the conclusion reached by Mackenzie that, because theatre became more accessible for people from all walks of life, melodrama became less class specific, often using racial differences as a substitute for domestic conflict. Spectacular theatre strove for realistic effects, vying to produce fresh gasps from an audience looking for fresh sensation beyond the proscenium arch.²⁰⁷

Political expediency and a fascination for the exotic also combined to produce theatrical extravaganzas like those discussed here, which were to captivate mass audiences in the west. Cherubini's opera of Ali Baba, based on the Arabian Nights, had its first production at the Paris Opera in 1833. It was staged regularly in several variations, became a perennial favourite as a pantomime and remains so today. Weber's Abu Hassan was performed in 1865 at Covent Garden. It was also presented, as Weber's Operetta, together with Mozart's opera-buffa, L'Oca del Cairo, on 12 May 1870 as it had been in 1811. Consequently an Arabian Knight's Entertainment was presented as an Oriental burlesque extravaganza at the Royal Charing Cross Theatre on 30 October 1869. The Arabian Nights was dramatised as Haroun Alrachid at the Globe Theatre in

²⁰⁶Playbill G. Enthoven Collection, Theatre Museum Covent Garden.

November 1887. This was a farcical comedy which exposed male idiosyncrasies; it had the hero reading the Arabian Nights in one sitting. Sheherazade was a frequently staged ballet and has still not diminished in popularity. The success of this theme was so great that it seems to have provided enough material for a public exhibition called Tales From The Arabian Nights to be held at Leighton House from 10 December 1997 to 30 January 1998.

Among other nineteenth century 'Oriental' entertainment were World's War; or, The Turks Faith and The Christians Valour staged at The Victoria Theatre in April 1854. According to the playbill at the Theatre Museum in Covent Garden, it included great sieges of Ptolemy, Jerusalem, and Constantinople featuring the final triumph of England and France over oppression and tyranny. Another such performance was Auber's The Circassian, a comic opera first performed at the Opera Comique Paris in 1861 and later it was staged at the Criterion in November 1887.

John Mackenzie, in his book, Orientalism has a different view from Said about the extent of dealings with binary moral absolutes in the theatrical world. According to him, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, India was treated with awe and respect, an attribute also to be found in the reports of travellers. Mackenzie confuses the issue when he elaborates his argument to show that sometimes this was expressed through spurious images of riches and plenty, which were presented as an ideal and contrasted with the disadvantages of the west. By pointing out that Marlowe's Tamburlaine was later associated with Milton's devil in

²⁰⁷Mackenzie, 180.

Paradise Lost.²⁰⁸ Mackenzie reinforces the argument of this thesis, that the image of the Muslim as evil was also a consequence of theatrical portrayal. This ambivalence was apparently expressed in the seventeenth century play Aureng-Zebe. The inimical mode of depiction was encouraged in pantomime which was encouraged by the patent system of restricted theatre licensing in London, which survived till 1843. After its abolition the power of the Lord Chamberlain grew. Domestic, political and class conflict, depiction of the royal family and politicians, references to the Irish problem, biblical scenes and religious controversy were banned until the twentieth century. The result was that subjects involving discovery, empire, war, depiction of others and the fantasy world were acceptable. Therefore these were re-emphasized by the development of a highly topical theatre through which audiences were introduced to the main events and ideas of the age.²⁰⁹ Pantomime was further established together with a tradition of retributive comedy which was intended to deflate the high and mighty in social and cultural terms. Oriental potentates were used to point up the satire of the first; crazes for chinoiserie and Egyptiana. During the height of the Napoleonic wars the theatre season of 1811-12 was notably Orientalist in tone, as evidenced in portrayals of Blue Beard and Timur.²¹⁰

In his account of the “Oriental” theatre Mackenzie is not concerned with genuine Oriental artefacts transmitted to the west, but with their reflection and

²⁰⁸Mackenzie, 181.

²⁰⁹Mackenzie, 180.

²¹⁰Mackenzie, 181.

reworking in western art.²¹¹ This characteristic was disturbing to the balance of authenticity as it only served to reaffirm erroneous stereotypes. It also resulted in the continuation of an unbroken chain of prejudice well into the nineteenth century, a tendency supplemented by the general requirements of entertainment of the period.

After a surfeit of these Oriental extravaganzas, it was rare to see discretion exercised, a question discussed in The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet, by Shaw. After Shaw was established as a writer, he declared that he was unable to write a drama on the life of Muhammad, because of the possibility of a protest from the Turkish Ambassador or from the Lord Chamberlain who fearing such a Turkish protest, would refuse permission to stage it.²¹² Such an unusual sensitivity to Muslim sentiments is unexpected. It was (apparently) a result of the delicate political situation of the time. In The Madras House, which was produced at the Savoy in 1910 by Shaw's close friend Harley Granville-Barker (1877-1946) an Oriental theme, was also introduced. This play represents a comparatively serious representation of most of the prevailing misconceptions about Islam, expressed by the bewildered family of the main character Constantine Madras, who has voluntarily become a Muslim. In the course of the play he cleverly rebuts most of these. Such statements of fact generally represented no bar to a continuance of the presentation of Oriental subjects, as the table of theatrical events and musical compositions appended to the thesis will illustrate. The staging of so many of these productions demonstrates the

²¹¹Mackenzie, preface, xv.

predilection of public taste, where a thirst for anything eastern made no discrimination between origins or purpose as long as the result was exotic and Oriental.

ART

After being amused by the extravaganzas portraying Muslims discussed above, it was not surprising that the general public, together with the literati who attended them, found nothing strange in the bill posters or costumes of a spectacle. These presentations effectively united a large part of the world, which could not be more disparate, into a single event and style. By doing so they effectively reinforced stereotypes of the Muslims. The same tendency was to prevail in Orientalist paintings depicting the Muslim world. Thackeray should not have wondered that artists had never attempted to depict everyday life on the Turkish streets, or such scenes as the camel market and other mundane events, instead of grand processions, sultans and magnificent landscapes.²¹³ Though some artists were to produce impressive works by doing precisely this, those who concentrated on fantasy as inspiration received the greater accolade. This tendency was also observed above in the discussion of literature, when the tastes of writers like Beckford were fed by an idea of what the east might be rather than by actual knowledge. Comparing the representations of the east by western artists, John Sweetman comments that, in spite of Britain's stronger political links with Islam,

²¹²Shaw, Prefaces 418.

²¹³Thackeray, Cornhill to Grand Cairo 91.

Europe made more creative use of it.²¹⁴ The Saracen as a figure of excess in western literature became a powerful conditioning factor for the artist as well. The image was inherited from the Middle Ages and from before, particularly from the Crusades which began in 1095. Thereafter, the early twelfth century was a particularly formative phase for the development of the distorted image, even though the interaction between the two worlds increased. This was because the western world was now emerging from its comparative backwardness, and was becoming increasingly confident of its abilities. In spite of evidence to the contrary, western man's sense of superiority may not have been unblinkered as was demonstrated by Thomas Roe, the English Ambassador to the Indian Mughal dynasty, in 1616. He may have been the first Englishman to feel a twinge of doubt when he was handed superlative copies of Isaac Oliver made by Mughal artists, though Roe's overall verdict was to be slighting. In the seventeenth century, when Turkey ceased to threaten Europe, the religious challenge initiated by the Crusades lost some of its urgency but the continuing regard for the Holy Land meant that it could not disappear from European view. Consequently in the later eighteenth century there was, by contrast, an appreciation of Muslim weapons and other relics as evidenced by the collection of Horace Walpole. Eventually the Saracenic element re-appeared in the literature of the Romantics when Scott provided a stimulus by portraying the medieval crusader hero in The Talisman.²¹⁵ In the world of art the Renaissance and Romantic image of the ideal man was now being

²¹⁴John Sweetman's, introduction Oriental Obsession: Islamic Inspiration in British and American Art and Architecture 1500-1920 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988) 2.

²¹⁵Sweetman, 6, 59.

expressed in terms of an alien culture. This was evidenced when non-conformists had their portraits painted in Turkish costume. According to Sweetman the Muslim could represent excess for the European, a rival discipline, as well as freedom from one's own discipline.²¹⁶ All of these notions were important to the nineteenth century, which was passionately interested in the motives of the hero. Delacroix tried to reconcile them and was influenced by Byron who hailed the contemporary Ali Pasha as a Mohammedan Buonoparte, cruel but mighty. Consequently The Massacre Of Chios (1824) by Delacroix, depicting the conquering Turks subjugating the Greeks, is a superficial indication of the crusades. However his other painting of Greece On The Ruins (1827) makes heroes of the Turks also.²¹⁷ In spite of the intentions of these artists, which may have differed from what is apparent in the paintings, the effect that they had on public opinion was ambivalent.

Particular mention must be made of the depiction of women in a Muslim harem. Arguably, one painting, being essentially the artist's individual depiction structured by artistic conventions, is as valid as any other. The confusion begins when the viewing public begins to take the painting as a realistic portrayal of the subject. This is what readily happened with paintings of the eastern world in general. Western viewers seemed to deliberately ignore the fact that a work of art cannot be a correct rendering because of its status as a work of imagination. A similar situation was manifested with the generally salacious paintings of the Muslim harem which came to be represented by Ingres' Odalisque. It is interesting

²¹⁶Sweetman, 8.

to note that Ingres' inspired by a non-Oriental source, painted three Odalisques.²¹⁸ Consequently the trend he set was followed by, among others, Renoir and Matisse. The nude in Orientalist paintings had more to do with indulging western fantasies and blaming Muslim proclivities than with reality. The nineteenth century naturalistic tendency in art lent greater authenticity to these scenes, specially when they were painted by artists like Delacroix who had visited the east. The reaction they produced was similar to that achieved by Ingres' odalisques, although Ingres drew the harem from imagination. John Sweetman says that the harem subjects of Ingres are to some extent eccentric, but even a purist will agree that they are not frivolous. The gouache variant of his harem compared very well with his other studies of the human form. His pictures are explained today as an exercise in volupté, and placed in the tradition of Titian's paintings of Venus.²¹⁹ Artistic merits notwithstanding, it is interesting to note that the viewing public could distinguish between the world of fantasy and reality when it came to mythological figures but lost this discerning faculty when it came to the representation of the Muslim harems. With these paintings as a guide, supplemented by prevailing depiction in literature and with few eyewitnesses outside the harem, except perhaps of the undress of some female slaves, it came to be generally accepted that Muslim women spent most of their lives in various states of indolence and deshabillé when they were not dressed up as tents. This trend was to prove so popular that it was eventually transferred onto photographic postcards in the

²¹⁷Sweetman, 245.

²¹⁸Giles Tillotson, personal interview, 25 July 1995.

²¹⁹Sweetman, 2.

Victorian age. Thus the familiar but false image of Ingres's Odalisque found its way later into the French Salon, onto postcards, and eventually into the ideas of western posterity. Writing on behalf of the "other", Malek Alloula exposes these ideas portrayed by artists by noting their selection of coffee drinking and smoking the hookah as stereotypical references to the inner harem. The hookah, Alloula says, is rarely used in Algeria and serves mostly as a part of interior decoration. Even in those parts of the Muslim world where it is used the reality is opposite to its evocation, associated with hashish, which gives life to a world of dreamy feminine presence in various states of self abandonment.²²⁰

In direct contrast to Orientalist paintings are the depiction of the harem by indigenous artists, which continue to be as authentic today as they must have been when they were painted. These specific scenes are found in the Badshahnamah and illustrate the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan's (1627-59) marriage ceremony, and the wives and daughters of his enemy Nazar Muhammad Khan of Khurasan against whom he had sent his son Aurangzeb and Jaswant Singh.²²¹ Only on rare occasions does a nude female form emerge in the miniature paintings of India, Persia and Turkey. These scenes, found in mid-sixteenth century paintings belonging to the school of Shah Tahmasp (1530-70), represent the moment when Prince Khusrau sees his beloved Shirin bathing in the woods. The original work here was an illustration by Sultan Mahmud in the Mss. of the Shahnamah by

²²⁰Hurgronje, 83.

²²¹Wali-ud-din Khuda Baksh, Descriptive List of Photographic Reproductions of Illustrations from three Persian Manuscripts in the Oriental Public Library at Bankipore India. Patna, 1911. "Badshahnamah" plates 3,15. Also see India Office Library Shahjehannama Persian Mss. Add 20735, 2: plate f248.

Nizami, executed for Shah Tahmasp in 1537. The other drawings, which are different in style and have rounded outlines, are by Kamal and include a stereotypical odalisque pose.²²² The reign of Shah Tahmasp was a period of innovations which may have contributed to the unrest amongst his subjects.²²³ It is not surprising that this was also the period when western techniques of painting began to influence the art of the miniature. Even those nude images which are commonly found in the illustrated manuscripts of the times are very different in style and content from the Orientalist ones. The indigenous miniatures or drawings usually illustrated manuscripts of legendary romances or other poetical works and were similar in form. This is usually the case for example, in Oriental collections like those of the Bodleian Library, and of the Chester Beatty. The collections of various other galleries and museums, including the British Museum, the Museum of Lahore, the Louvre, the Padshahnamah exhibition at the Queens Gallery London, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York all show the same tendencies. Among the New York examples, is a scene painted in Herat in 1524, showing Shireen bathing modestly attired in pantaloons, with her long hair concealing her torso. This is similar to that of the mid-seventeenth century, belonging to the school of Bukhara, which depicts, another legendary romantic couple, Yusuf and Zuleikha, in the Bustan by Sheikh Sadi wearing ordinary dress. These in turn were not different from a picture of the school of Shaykh Zadeh which has women playing musical instruments in a pavilion while clothed in daily wear including

²²²F.R. Martin The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia India and Turkey from the 8th to the 18th Century. 2 vols. (London: Quatritch, 1912) 2: plates 133, 120. Also see India Office Library Mss.Or 2932 plate f49b.

headresses. An eighteenth century Mughal painting also shows a Princess entertaining a guest at a pleasure party, dressed discreetly in an (albeit transparent) material, as the season would have warranted. A juxtaposition of even these supposedly salacious indigenous depiction with those of the Orientalists will make the differences between the two styles quite obvious. The fact that there is such a vast contradiction between the two styles is also a result of a difference of attitude towards paintings themselves. In the west artists produced material that would be put on public display, while in the east paintings were commissioned for private collections and did not have a message to convey, especially when purchased by indigenous commissioners.

The gap between the old and new indigenous styles generally grew after the sixteenth century, at the time when east-west interaction became more frequent. As the dominance of the west increased politically it manifested itself in the world of art also, consequently there was a great overlapping of styles which reflected British tastes. It was also an unconscious result of the absorption of foreign styles by indigenous artists, working at the behest of British masters. Therefore art was used to confirm the preconceived images of western viewers.²²⁴ This is especially prevalent in the Indian miniatures of later times which were imbued with the expertise of the west. Westernising tendencies also led the Ottoman Empire to create its own school of painting in the Occidental style, a style of which Hamdy Bey was the most celebrated exponent. Similarly Orientalist depiction of the Middle East and North Africa was strikingly distinct from other Imperial art and

²²³Barbara Brend, personal interview 10 Nov.1996.

was influenced by the Islamic Near East. According to Mackenzie it celebrated cultural proximity, historical parallelism and religious familiarity rather than true "Otherness". This was evidenced in the works of David Roberts, J.F. Lewis, Georges Clarin, and Henri Regnault, who visited Granada before proceeding further east. The European artists projected onto the east their fears and fantasies but also aspirations, renewed values and wished for freedoms. Paradoxically, they often sought to portray, not the strikingly different, but the oddly familiar (evidenced in portrayals of chivalry, the lion hunt and the horse) and they did so in order to make a comment on their own societies. The honourable motives of the western artists seem to have been of little consequence as the collective image they projected continued to be negative. John Sweetman's book was formulated out of an interest in John Frederick Lewis's paintings of the Orient. He describes Lewis as "an unconventional and unmoralising Victorian" artist of life in Cairo. Unlike the work of other Orientalist artists who painted from imagination, Lewis's art was based on actual experience. According to Sweetman, the Classical western tradition rejected the idea of Orientalist art as escape and encouraged the assessment of Orientalism as a kind of virulent chinoiserie run to seed. Chinoiserie was propelled forward by an idea of what China was felt to be like: an idea made more potent by distance. In Sweetman's view, the main period of chinoiserie coincided with the rococo style in decoration of about 1750, a period when many Europeans were looking for a more unbuttoned, if not frankly informal, art.²²⁵

²²⁴Giles Tillotson, personal interview 5 Oct.1995.

²²⁵Sweetman, 1, 3, 2.

Mackenzie's Orientalism History, theory and the arts, which treats the same subject, followed fairly closely on Sweetman's. Mackenzie agrees with Sweetman's analysis and adds that Macaulay lampooned the craze for chinoiserie as a means of attacking Queen Mary and her introduction of Dutch taste to England.²²⁶ This interest in the Oriental was also manifested in the celebration of Napoleon's exile in Elba which led to the erection of a temple, a pagoda, and a Chinese bridge in St. James's Park, something which may also have resulted from the taste for chinoiserie of the Prince Regent. The essence of the chinoiserie style is far removed from the reality of a European version of the east. Turqueries, by contrast, was a broad term which conversely could also point to close acquaintance with, the surface reality, at least of Muslim life.²²⁷ What Chinoiserie could not provide in substance and self sufficiency for painters was provided by the "other". It is true that rich interiors and decorations created respect and amalgamation, but the effect was limited to this alone.²²⁸

Mackenzie's book also challenges the belief that the Orientalist trend in art was an agreeable frivolity based on escapism. He makes the claim on the basis of the long association of Europe with visual ideas from the Oriental world. This association started from the fifteenth century and lasted to the twentieth century. The relation with Islam, however, was different since it had existed so close at hand in Spain, Sicily, and Constantinople. Mackenzie accepts, however, that Persia

²²⁶Mackenzie, 109.

²²⁷Sweetman, 183, 59.

²²⁸Sweetman, 245.

and Arabia remained relatively remote though they were increasingly explored in the nineteenth century and introduced into Romantic writing.²²⁹

Mackenzie is also greatly concerned with the ideas of Edward Said and his followers. Mackenzie describes the use of the term “Orientalism” by Said as a construct, an emblem of domination and a weapon of power and not a reality, with the older concept, which referred to British policy in India, representing a conservative and romantic approach. The old method not only utilised the languages and laws of both Hindu and Muslim India, but also desired the preservation of allegedly traditional social relations. This Orientalism was assaulted by evangelism and utilitarianism and was, from the 1830s, overwhelmed by the new Anglicist approach.

According to Mackenzie a full understanding of Orientalism can only come from artistic promiscuity, so he adopts an eclectic approach to the arts. The prime focus is on British works, but he also considers other western works. In discussing the world of art, Mackenzie contends with the idea that visual representations apparently expressed a set of binary oppositions, turning the representative east into the moral negative of the west because it limited possible readings of paintings and other visual forms. For him, Victorian and Edwardian artists were not only eclectic in their approach to the arts, they were also massively eclectic in their response to cultures. For Mackenzie they were the first age to access these alien societies and, as a result, they resorted to classification, in order to understand the welter of material with which they were confronted. He agrees that stereotyping

²²⁹Sweetman, introduction, 2, 3.

did exist in popular cultural forms but insists that it was one half of a striking duality. In the "high arts" the depiction and adaptation were powerful and positive.²³⁰

This may be a plausible explanation but it does not eliminate the problem that most pictorial representations of Muslim life were misleading and ultimately perpetuated a negative portrayal. In design Oriental art and crafts were used to underpin Modernist and quasi-medieval standpoints.²³¹ This is an area which had a relatively anodyne effect on the image of the Muslim.

Many buildings in Britain were constructed according to eastern designs. Prominent among these buildings were Lord Bute's Cardiff Castle, Lord Leighton's House in Kensington, with the Arab Hall, together with other rooms in country houses. This predilection for Muslim architecture is observed in Thackeray's reaction to the mosques and other buildings in Istanbul. Having been weaned on the prevalent attitudes of the west, Thackeray was surprised into remarking on Muslim architecture "why, Mohammadanism must have been right and lovely too once. Never did a creed possess temples more elegant; as elegant as the cathedral at Rouen, or the baptistery at Pisa and compared it to 'Gothic architecture' which is Catholicism carved in stone".²³² Even though there is no such thing as an Islamic style, as the cupola, the niche, and the minaret only appeared in the reign of al-Walid, these were to be the dominant features of Muslim architecture,

²³⁰Mackenzie, preface xii-xvi.

²³¹Mackenzie, 108.

²³²Thackeray, Cornhill to Grand Cairo 262.

characteristic of what was to be known as the Saracenic Mosque.²³³ Architectural motifs were one of the aspects of Muslim life which were readily incorporated into the western world both indoors and outdoors. To satisfy public taste the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly was established for the display of eastern artefacts; later in the century, in 1894, the Omar Khayyam Club, a convivial organisation, was founded and was mentioned regularly in George Gissing's (1857-1903) letters to H.G.Wells (1866-1946).²³⁴ The Oriental style in architecture became more prominent at the end of the nineteenth century and was used for exhibitions and leisure centres, but Moorish and other Muslim architectural styles were more influential as they could easily blend with European forms and Indian elements. Many buildings for national and international exhibitions were "Oriental" in style but they housed western technology, perhaps to show a creative amalgamation between the modern and the exotic.²³⁵ Unfortunately, even in the realm of architecture the end result of incorporating eastern styles was frequently to be a negative one. Because the two worlds were climatically and topographically so different the transplanting of the Oriental style mostly underlined these differences and created a glaring contrast. A prime example of this effect was the Prince Regent's Pavilion at Brighton. It also served to perpetuate negative impressions of the east: opulence, excess, intrigue and vulgarity which has continued to be associated with the Muslim world.

What is self evident from the study of these aspects of politics, religious zeal, fantasy, propaganda or artistic licence, in western portrayals of the musical,

²³³Richard Burton, Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah & Mecca Memorial ed.2 vols. (London: Edwards, 1893) 1:92.

²³⁴Royal A. Gettman, Gissing And H.G.Wells (London: Davis, 1961) 33.

theatrical or visual Muslim world, is that there is a marked unresolved incongruity between the two perspectives of the observer and the observed. Comparing the portrayals of Muslims and Islam in history and literature, with those in the arts, the discrepancy becomes progressively diffuse. The aberrations arose less due to forces inimical to Islam, and more to Muslim manifestations. Although the bias persisted unconsciously it remained in the background. As these depiction were more tangible, the Muslim's contribution to the development of the stereotype can be easily discerned. Conversely, because the Islamic and Muslim aspects were so accessible, and observable, it also shows irresponsibility on the part of the western recorders, to consistently portray only what was sensational as a result of negative selectivity. Thus it must be concluded that the cultural portrayals of Islam and the Muslims in nineteenth century Britain were surprisingly uniform, and were a reflection of the distorted image that had been evolved through history and literature.

²³⁵Mackenzie, 74, 89.

CHAPTER V - THE QUR'AN

As the Qur'an is the primary source for Islam it has always been the focus for both denigrators and proponents of the religion. Many of the misconceptions about the Qur'an result from ignorance of the nature of the sacred script of Islam. This makes it advisable to initiate a detailed study of the history of the compilation of the Qur'an, together with an analysis of those portions of it which have persistently given rise to misunderstandings.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The Qur'an is revered as the holy book of the Muslims. They believe it was revealed in Arabic to the Prophet Muhammad, in Mecca and Madina. This was done through a sporadic series of Divine revelations. These revelations lasted over a period of twenty-three years, commencing in 610 and lasting until 632 the year the Prophet died. The reason for this intermittent reception was laid out in the Qur'anic verses 25:32 and 17:106. The Qur'an explained that it was meant to strengthen belief and to show that even though delivered piecemeal it had an inner consistency which pointed to a Divine origin.

The Qur'an, which literally means recitation, is very different from the accepted idea of a book. It is more of an aural experience, which is in harmony with the Arab's long tradition of verbal collections. The Qur'an is a collection of all the revelations Muhammad received during his period of Prophethood. In the beginning the word Qur'an occurs frequently because it was to be recited, but as

time passed the Qur'anic revelations were written down and so the word kitab or book appeared in later *surahs*. Therefore the Quran is also known as *Furqan* which means that which differentiates between right and wrong. Equivalent in size to the New Testament, it is divided into thirty parts and consists of 114 chapters or *surahs* which are a collection of *ayahs* or signs. These *surahs* or chapters are distinguished as either Meccan or Madinan according to the place of the Prophet's residence at the time of revelation of the introductory *ayah*.

The Qur'an emphasises the following points:

1. Islam is strictly monotheistic, and rejects any plurality in the essence of God.
2. The accountability of man in the Hereafter.
3. Muhammad has not come with a new religion but follows that of the previous Prophets from Adam to Jesus. All of these Prophets are regarded as Muslims because they submitted themselves to the will of God. The Apostle believes in what had been previously revealed and that Islam is therefore a confirmation of the previous Prophets.
4. The Qur'an is the basic source of Shariah law. The Qur'an makes elaborate statements concerning women, the laws of inheritance and financial transactions. The Qur'anic *ayahs* pertaining to law are general in meaning, have a wide application, and are to be used as guide-lines.
5. There is a strong code of ethics in the Qur'an regarding individual and collective conduct. Apart from basic obligatory duties of Islam, additional regulations for the life of the community are also expressed. These include practical measures for setting up a Muslim polity as well as rules and

regulations governing social life.

The Qur'an being a Divine revelation, was and still is memorised by Muslims as a means of preservation. As far as Muhammad was concerned he was himself given an assurance regarding this in the Qur'an :

MOVE NOT thy tongue in haste, [repeating the words of the revelation:] for, behold, it is for Us to gather it [in thy heart,] and cause it to be read [as it ought to be read]. (75:16-17)

On a practical level, Muhammad used to recite the revelations which his followers repeated after him. Groups of Muslims memorised the *ayahs* and checked each other for mistakes, they virtually learned and lived it. In addition to this learning the revealed *ayahs* were also written down, a task which the Prophet designated to certain members of his followers, as he himself was illiterate. After the death of the Prophet the need for a standardised written text arose. While most of his contemporaries or Companions were still alive, a final text of the Qur'an was edited. A copy of this definitive text was dispatched, to each of the provinces for guidance.²³⁶

The study of the Qur'an is quite complex and requires the knowledge of various disciplines. The most important of these is to be aware of the context or background of the *ayah* or verse, and the internal relationship of the Qur'an. To draw hasty conclusions on the basis of a single *ayah* or number of *ayahs* without the knowledge of the whole is self defeating, as was specified in the Qur'an, not only for the Prophet in particular, but for the people at large.

²³⁶Halil Inalcik, Muhammad Abd al-Ra'uf and Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, Shariah Ummah and Khalafah (Karachi: Karachi UP, 1987) 45.

[Know,] then, [that] God is sublimely exalted, the Ultimate Sovereign, the Ultimate Truth: and [knowing this,] do not approach the Qur'an in haste, ere it has been revealed unto thee in full, but [always] say: "O my Sustainer, cause me to grow in knowledge!" (20:114)

This stipulation makes the study of the Qur'an difficult for even those professing the faith. While people who approach the Qur'an with preconceived notions are usually baffled.

CRITICISM

Muslims have no trouble with the claim of the detractors of the Qur'an that most of it is a repetition of the Old and New Testament for that is exactly what the Qur'an claimed Islam to be; the latest edition of all the monotheistic religions that were revealed before it, with certain amendments. On the contrary the frequent allegation found in western sources that the Qur'an borrowed from Christian and Jewish theology is never accepted eventhough the similarities are profuse. For the Muslims this was inevitable as it was the same God who had been revealing His word over the centuries. Because of persistent deviation from the previous revelations it was inevitable that the eternal Message was persistently repeated. For Muslims Muhammad had only a passive role as the recipient of the Qur'an. While accepting that he was in contact with other religions it is maintained that he had nothing to do with composing the *ayahs* of the Qur'an. Irving attributed Muhammad's knowledge of the Old and New Testament to Waraqa a cousin of Khadija, the Prophet's first wife, who was originally a Jew and subsequently a

Christian.²³⁷ Irving was to continue to state that the Qur'an leaned more on the New Testament as the doctrines had been expounded by Christian sectarians of Arabia who also disagreed only with the divinity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity.²³⁸ It is a peculiar situation in which both sides are expressing an identical idea but with totally different intentions. This may be one of the reasons for the lack of debate about this allegation which continued to be levelled at the Qur'an and the Prophet.

Another method employed for criticising Islam by non-Muslim literature in the nineteenth century consisted in attacking the Messenger of the Qur'an. These efforts at defaming Muhammad brought the Islamic belief in the divine origin of the Qur'an into question. The fact that Qur'anic revelations were always preceded by certain physical manifestations in the person of the Prophet has been persistently misconstrued by Muhammad's detractors. An easy explanation for orientalists was to ascribe it to an epileptic fit. Theodore Noldeke (1836-1930), a German philologist and Orientalist, attempts to account for the revelation of the Qur'an in human terms. He puts forward various theories for it amongst which he mentions the alleged epileptic fits of Muhammad although Noldeke says himself that he is dubious about this.²³⁹ Washington Irving, in a note quoting Gustav Weil, describes the physical manifestations that used to accompany the revelations which were paroxysms at times with a ringing in the ears sometimes associated

²³⁷Washington Irving, Mahomet and His Successors 2 vols. (London: Darf, 1985) 1:62 .

²³⁸Irving, 1:80.

²³⁹Theodore Noldeke, Sketches from Eastern History Trans. J.S. Black (London: Darf, 1985) 25.

with epilepsy.²⁴⁰ This question was also discussed in an article titled the "Epileptic Origin Of Islamism" in the Popular Science Monthly of 1872. The article stated that "It seems incredible that a religion which sways the minds of 200,000,000 of the human race should have no better foundation than the visions and dreams of an epileptic." This was a paper written by J.C. Howden, the medical Superintendent of a Lunatic Asylum, on the subject of epilepsy and of religious sentiment in patients. Howden equated Muhammad's doctrines with those of Immanuel Swendenbourg.²⁴¹ This argument was advanced in spite of the fact that Simon Ockley had previously discredited the charge and had insisted that, while later Byzantine historians incessantly represented Muhammad as full of imperfections of the mind and body, no Arab historian mentioned epilepsy or any signs of it. Since this is so the assertion should be dismissed for lack of proof along with other fallacies circulated by the Christians.²⁴² On the contrary, these descriptions which were apocryphal for Muslims were to continue in circulation for a long time. They were even found in the nineteenth century, in the well meaning efforts of writers such as Thomas Carlyle, who said of the Qur'an that "It is the confused ferment of a great rude human soul".²⁴³ With one sentence Thomas Carlyle sweeps away the fulcrum of Muslim belief and encapsulates the whole controversy regarding the Qur'an and Muhammad.

²⁴⁰Irving, 1:68.

²⁴¹Popular Science Monthly vol. II (Nov.1872-April 1873): 608.

²⁴²Ockley, 1: 301.

²⁴³Thomas Carlyle, Heroes and Hero worship and the Heroic in History (London: Chapman, 1840.) 234.

It is obvious that the Muslim view must be diametrically opposed to that of Carlyle, as the divine nature of the Qur'an is the only basis for Muslim belief. Without this belief they might just as well have been *Hunafa*, and the Prophet an exalted Meccan

ISLAMIC VIEWPOINT

Keeping in view the stated intentions of non-Muslim writers, as well as the fact that the Qur'an is rhetorical in nature, and arbitrarily compiled, understanding the text will always be difficult without sufficient knowledge of its background. Lack of knowledge of the non-chronological arrangement of the *ayahs* and *surahs* increases the confusion in understanding especially when the Qur'an is studied in translation. The *ayahs* in the Qur'an are identified in Arabic by rhyme or rhythm, and, though apparent in the written text, are more so in the recitation, a distinction which is irretrievably lost in translation. Thus an *ayah* may end and another may begin in the middle of a sentence, and the end of an *ayah* marks a pause in the recitation of the Qur'an, rather than a termination of an idea, a sentence or a revelation.²⁴⁴ The Qur'an for Muslims can never be described as in any language other than Arabic. At this point it must be specified that the Arabic used in the Qur'an is unique to that used in any part of the Arab world in the past as well as in the present. This differentiation had set in even during the Prophet's lifetime. Without sufficient information regarding the background of the *ayahs* the meaning

²⁴⁴Hanna E. Kassis, introduction, A Concordance of the Qur'an (London: California UP, 1983) xviii.

of the Qur'an was also equally inaccessible to Arabic speaking people as it was to non-Arabic speaking nations.

Therefore the princess in Sherer's novel The Princess of Islam who filled the loneliness of her days in the harem with "... prayers constantly, and reading the Koran in Persian",²⁴⁵ was in error. There can be translations of the Qur'an into any language, the sacred Qur'an is always in Arabic and a translation cannot be considered on the same level as the original. The decision to even allow translations of the Qur'an was also a much contested one amongst the early Muslims, but the vast conquests of the Muslims compelled them to do this. Over the years many non-Arabs were to put forward unsuccessful arguments for the Qur'an and formal prayer to be sanctioned in the native tongue of each nationality. Imam Abu Hanifa is said to have sanctioned the recitation of a Persian translation of the Qur'an within prayer. However this idea was not accepted by the followers of his school. There is also a general belief among Arab scholars, in common with all translators, that the Qur'an is not translatable and loses much in tone and nuance, as well as the incommunicable beauty, grandeur and grace of the original.²⁴⁶ That is why it is not surprising to read remarks such as those of Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) who says that the Qur'an is, "...addressed to a devout Arabian, whose mind is attuned to faith and rapture; whose ear is delighted by the music of sounds; ..The harmony and copiousness of style will not reach, in a

²⁴⁵Sherer, 181.

²⁴⁶Kassis, introduction ix.

version, the European infidel".²⁴⁷ While Theodore Noldeke's impression is "...the first perusal leaves on a European an impression of chaotic confusion,"²⁴⁸

These two writers would have been better served if they had taken Bernard Shaw's advice in the preface to Androcles and The Lion: "Let us admit that without the proper clues the gospels are, to a modern educated person, nonsensical and incredible, whilst the apostles are unreadable. But with clues they are fairly plain sailing".²⁴⁹

Western writers have incessantly combined this ignorance with a zeal that is greater than that of an enthusiastic Muslim for literal interpretation of each word of the Qur'an. John Osborn, after seven year's study of Muslim theology, concluded by believing that the descriptions in the Qur'an were to be taken in the literal sense only and that allegorical interpretations must be rejected.²⁵⁰

The result of this method is one of complete confusion and misinterpretation of the Qur'an. Even when they have used the exegesis, as Noldeke claims to have done, they come up with a curious view: "An unbiased European can no doubt see many things at a glance more clearly than a good Moslem who is under the influence of religious prejudice".²⁵¹ Undoubtedly what this phenomenal person sees will be his own view and far removed from that of the Muslim.

²⁴⁷Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire 3 vol. (New York: Random, n.d.) 3:86.

²⁴⁸Noldeke, 21.

²⁴⁹Bernard Shaw, Prefaces 556.

²⁵⁰Robert D. Osborn, Islam Under the Arabs (London: Longmans, 1876) 31-38.

²⁵¹Noldeke, 57.

This does not preclude the fact that Muslims may also encounter difficulties with understanding the meaning of the text. In conjunction with Shaw's advice we might note Muhammad Asad's explanation that there are two kinds of messages in the Qur'an: those that are clear in and by themselves and those that are allegorical. This division is mentioned in the Qur'an itself and the clarification makes it accessible to all who think.²⁵²

He it is who has bestowed upon thee from on high this divine writ, containing messages that are clear in and by themselves - and these are the essence of the divine writ - as well as others that are allegorical. Now those whose hearts are given to swerving from the truth go after that part of the divine writ which has been expressed in allegory, seeking out [what is bound to create] confusion, and seeking [to arrive at] its final meaning [in an arbitrary manner]; but none save God knows its final meaning. Hence, those who are deeply rooted in knowledge say: "We believe in it; the whole [of the divine writ] is from our Sustainer - albeit none takes this to heart save those who are endowed with insight.(3:7)

As man is left to interpret this division there is a natural variation of thought, which leads to confusion. The Prophet was also given the responsibility of explanation in the Qur'an

.... And upon thee [too] have We bestowed from on high this reminder, that thou might clear unto mankind all that has ever been thus bestowed upon them, and that they might take thought.(16:44)

Therefore after an *ayah* was revealed, the Companions, in spite of being contemporaries of the Prophet, still faced difficulties. This was the case with the *ayah* 2:187 which occurs during the account of *Ramadan* the month of fasting. The Companions needed the Prophet to interpret for them that the division

²⁵²Muhammad Asad, The Message of the Qur'an (Gibraltar: al-Andalus, 1980) 989.

between the black and white “thread” was not to be taken literally and actually meant daybreak. Then, regarding the *ayah* “Those who have attained to faith, and who have not obscured their faith by wrongdoing- (6:82). The Prophet had to explain that injustice or wrongdoing meant *shirk* or associating others with God in this *ayah*. The idea that the Qur’an is a book of guidance for the whole of life and for all times was further consolidated at the Prophet's death, when a pall of disbelief and despondency hung over the mourners. Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, referred to the Qur’an and announced in unequivocal words, that for those who worshipped Muhammad the man, he was dead, but for those who worshipped the God of Muhammad, Islam lived on. Abu Bakr made his announcement valid by reminding the grief stricken Muslims about the *ayah* 3:144 which underlined Muhammad’s mortality. Thus the Qur’an was used to instruct the Muslims for the first time on the Prophet's death. This need had arisen even though the Qur’an had continuously stressed the mortality of Muhammad in *ayahs* which are similar to:

(128) INDEED, there has come unto you [o mankind] an apostle from among yourselves:(9:128)

EXEGESIS

After the Prophet's death further problems arose as Islam had already expanded across many different nations who also needed to have the Qur’an explained to them. Some Companions were hesitant to contribute to the Qur’an because of their reverence for it and because they feared that they might get the meaning wrong. Exegesis was developed by Abdullah b. Abbas (616-687) and

after undergoing variations for some centuries it was discontinued, only to be reintroduced in the nineteenth century by Muhammad Abduh.

The early jurists who had attempted to relate Qur'anic rulings to practical life were not biased and were in search of truth. They would use their intellectual ability combined with knowledge of the *hadith*. These jurists would unhesitatingly answer questions about *ayahs* which formed the *ahkam* or rules. On the others which deal with personal order they were very careful. After the late second and early third century, a change in thinking came about as the followers of these jurists were not tolerant and many other schools of thought arose. According to Khan, Islam was a pure theism until two centuries after the death of the Prophet "when the ideas of learned men as to its principles were reduced to writing" which led to four schools of law being established. Intolerance arose when later Muslim jurists began insisting that Muslims should embrace any of these theological schools of thought in addition to their other divisions of sects. A small group dissented against this restriction and survived till the seventeenth century when a clash brought them victory under Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhab. His followers, who conquered Mecca, destroyed the four pulpits of these schools which had been built in the Kaabah.²⁵³ Osborn stressed that these "civil wars" affected Muslim theology by hardening hearts and inflaming the passions of both adversaries.²⁵⁴ Hunter, commenting on the reverberations of these actions on the *Ahl-i-Hadith* and on other Muslims in India in the nineteenth century, was to elaborate an opposing view, that the Qur'an was written to suit the "local necessities of a

²⁵³Khan, Review 10.

warring Arabian tribe" and that many generations of scholars and interpreters had evolved out of it a "not unsymmetrical system of civil polity".²⁵⁵ What was indisputable was that Muslim orthodoxy had given up its old capacity for innovation and developed reservations regarding the induction of anything new.

ABROGATION

The understanding of the Qur'an becomes more difficult when one encounters the idea of *naskh* or abrogation which was drawn from the following *ayah*:

Any message which We annul or consign to oblivion
We replace with a better or a similar one.
Dost thou not know that God has the power to will
anything?(2:106)

However this *ayah* is said to be referring to the suppression of the Biblical dispensation by that of the Qur'an, and has been erroneously understood by interpreting the word *ayah* as verse instead of as message when referring to the smaller units of the Qur'an. This view expressed by Asad's is supported by the lack of any reliable tradition to the effect that the Prophet ever declared an *ayah* of the Qur'an to have been "abrogated". The "doctrine of abrogation" may have arisen due to the efforts of some early commentators of the Qur'an. In overcoming the difficulty of reconciling one Qur'anic *ayah* with another they declared it to have been abrogated. As there is no unanimity of opinion amongst its upholders as to the number of *ayahs* affected by it and whether a complete *ayah* was eliminated or only a part of it was retained, this opinion cannot be upheld. On

²⁵⁴Osborn, introduction ix.

²⁵⁵ Hunter, Mussulmans 113.

the contrary the difficulty in interpreting the two *ayahs* disappears when *ayah* is understood to mean message.²⁵⁶ This becomes self evident when it is considered in the light of the preceding *ayah*:

Neither those from among the followers of earlier revelation who are bent on denying the truth, nor those who ascribe divinity to other beings beside God, would like to see any good ever bestowed upon you from on high by your Sustainer; but God singles out for His grace whom He wills-for God is limitless in His great bounty. (2:105)

Apart from this there is no evidence of abrogation in the Qur'an and whatever the differences amongst Muslims may be they generally do not make the observations expressed by the authors quoted below.

Gibbon ascribed to the dubious allegation that the Prophet tampered with the contents of the Qur'an and described as a "saving maxim" the *ayahs* in the Koran endorsing the changes.²⁵⁷ William Muir, in 1894, also erroneously said that the Qur'an itself recognises the withdrawal of certain passages, after they had been promulgated as a part of the Revelation, but admitted that none of these passages remained except in their altered form. He referred to as many as 225 such *ayahs* but does not specify a single one.²⁵⁸ Irving was to say that the Qur'an, as it now exists was not the same as that revealed to Muhammad as it had undergone much corruption and interpolation.²⁵⁹ Theodore Noldeke also stated that "Fortunately

²⁵⁶Asad, see foot-note 87: 23.

²⁵⁷Gibbon, 3:85.

²⁵⁸William Muir, introduction The Life of Mahomet from Original Sources 3 ed. (London: Smith, 1894). xxv.

²⁵⁹Irving, 1: 335.

for knowledge, respect for the sacredness of the letter has led to the collection of all revelations" both abrogated and abrogating.²⁶⁰

It is accepted by Muslims that there are some *ayahs*, such as those concerning adultery and wine, which were superseded by later revelations, but all of these are recorded in the Qur'an. There are drastic changes in some, and the development of discourse is there for observation as none of these is replaced by another. If the "Orientalist" charges were authentic then only the final version should have been preserved. If any *ayahs* had to be abrogated by Muhammad then expediency pointed to those *ayahs* in the Qur'an which were reprimands for the Prophet. A major example was that occasioned by a blind man interrupting the Prophet, while he was involved in conversation with important chieftains, and so ignored the man's persistence. This immediately prompted a revelation which exposed the Prophet's vulnerability. Noldeke also notes varying allegations of a similar nature that the Prophet had caused insertions and erasures to be made in the Qur'an and that "he seems to have occasionally dictated the same *surah* to different persons in slightly different terms". Noldeke did not indicate which these were, and referred only to the following *ayah* in the Qur'an which he says was a confession of the reproaches of the people:²⁶¹

And now that We replace one message by another - since God is fully aware of what He bestows from on high, step by step - they [who deny the truth] are wont to say, "Thou but inventest it!" Nay, but most of them do not understand it! (16:101)

²⁶⁰Noldeke, 47.

²⁶¹Noldeke, 26.

According to Asad this *ayah* is an echo of the previous explanation of the replaced revelation being a synonym for the Scriptures which had been updated by the Qur'an, a later revelation.²⁶²

Gibbon and Muir chose to ignore the second *ayahs* as well as those *ayahs* which were presented as reprimands or contrary to the Prophet's intentions or actions. If what Noldeke suggested were true then there would have been endless deprecations amongst the many amanuenses of the Prophet, and there is no record of such incidents. It is accepted that some of the Companions differed amongst themselves regarding the recitation of a passage. The Prophet resolved this altercation amongst the Arab tribes, giving permission regarding the pronunciation of the Qur'an in one of seven ways. Noldeke concedes the authenticity of this dictum.²⁶³ These seven forms of reciting the Qur'an were allowed because there were many Arabic dialects which were different from the Prophet's own. Later on Muslims adopted seven ways of reading the Qur'an which were established by seven famous reciters of the Qur'an. Each master had two disciples so there were actually fourteen versions of which now only two are in use while a third way is being revived. Hannah Kassis adds to the explanation with: "As there are seven main traditions of transmission ("Readings") of the Qur'an, there are also variations in the identification of some of the verses". When enumeration began to replace the decorative defining of the *ayahs*, the variations remained, and there are editions of the Qur'an with different *ayah* enumeration.²⁶⁴ Margoliouth said that,

²⁶²Asad, see foot-note 125: 412.

²⁶³Noldeke, 27.

²⁶⁴Kassis, viii.

to enable anyone who did not have a teacher to guide him to recite the Qur'an correctly, as there were minor discrepancies in the fragments of the Qur'an quoted in the *hadith*, improvements in Arabic writing were introduced. Similarly systems of intonation were introduced, equivalent to the Jewish system, in order to aid uniformity of recitation. These intonations could only be acquired orally and were afterwards stereotyped as seven or ten.²⁶⁵

WINE

An example of Qur'anic *ayahs* being superseded by new ones are those regarding wine and they are all included in the Qur'an. The study of the development of this interdiction against wine will clarify the allegations of abrogation. It is interesting to note that this is another of those interdictions which is abandoned by Muslims with the least qualm.

The confusion begins with the following *ayahs* which if taken literally give permission for the imbibing of wine.

(25) They will be given a drink of pure wine whereon
the seal [of God] will have been set, (26) pouring
forth with a fragrance of musk. (83:25)

However, when studied within the context of exegesis, the conclusion is that the expression 'pure wine' upon which "the seal" or sanction of God of non-intoxicating effects is set, is a symbol of paradise; alluding to the other-worldly joys by comparing them to the pleasurable sensations of this world, and then saying that they will be immeasurably intensified. Asad says that the mystical

²⁶⁵D.S. Margoliouth, *Mohammedanism* (London: Williams, n.d.) 71.

interpretation by Maulana Rumi of "pure wine" in an allusion to a spiritual vision of God is fully justified by the *ayahs* that follow:²⁶⁶

To that [wine of paradise], then, let all such aspire as
[are willing to] aspire to things of high account (27)
for it is composed of all that is most exalting -(28) a
source [of bliss] wherof those who are drawn close
unto God shall drink: (83:26-28)

The following are the relevant *ayahs* directly concerning the drinking of wine and intoxicants.

THEY WILL ASK thee about intoxicants and games
of chances. Say: "In both there is great evil as well
some benefit for man; but the evil which they cause is
greater than the benefit which they bring." (2:219)

Then there is the stricture regarding praying in a drunken state:

O YOU who have attained to faith! Do not attempt
to pray while you are in a state of drunkenness, [but
wait] until you know that you are saying; (4:43)

Again there is an exhortation regarding intoxicants;

O YOU who have attained to faith! Intoxicants, and
games of chance, and idolatrous practices, and the
divining of future are but a loathsome evil of Satan's
doing: shun it, then so that you might attain to a
happy state! (91) By means of intoxicants and games
of chance Satan seeks only to sow enmity and hatred
among you, and to turn you away from the
remembrance of God and from prayer. Will you not,
then, desist? (5:90)

It is easy to see how these *ayahs*, taken in isolation, can be quoted to suit a particular bent of mind but, studied in full, they show a coherent development of the issue. These *ayahs*, along with *hadith*, formed the basis for the subsequent framework of the schools of Jurisprudence.

This prohibition regarding wine has always aroused great controversy amongst non-Muslim writers and observers, and the Islamic point of view is again

²⁶⁶Asad, see foot-note 8: 938.

generally misrepresented. As the *ayahs* of the Qur'an are pervaded with a certain ambiguity it has been very easy for Muslims to present variations in their behaviour. This led to various conclusions being drawn by observers of them. Bernier in his travels recounts the words of the orthodox Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb who excused himself with: "... as a Mahometan, I feel scruples which do not permit me to indulge in the pleasures of the table".²⁶⁷ In Journey to Persia Morier comments on Shah Abbas's drinking as "... the use of spirituous liquors in general has depended, in Persia as in Turkey and other Muhammadan countries, less on the precepts of the Koran, than on the will and character of the reigning Prince".²⁶⁸ Morier, in Ayesha, adapts a custom used in Spain of identifying Christians from Jews by serving them with port. A bowl of wine is offered to be drunk in order to divide the Christians from the Muslims.²⁶⁹ Frazer, in the Kuzzilbash, describing the dissolute behaviour of the Muslim camp, says: "... being little in the company of priests, they probably forgot those texts of the Qur'an which interdict wine", while "dwelling on those parts, which paint the joys of Paradise, they loved to anticipate them in the arms of such terrestrial houries as fortune threw in their way".²⁷⁰ Froude, in Chiefs of Dunboy narrates the episode of an Irishman masquerading as a Turkish doctor of the Sultan who acquired many admirers. He was only detected when he invited members of Parliament to visit him and they penetrated his disguise: "What circumcised philistine is this?" After remarking that his beard was long enough, but to prove his Christianity he was

²⁶⁷Francois Bernier, Travel in the Mogul Empire A.D.1656-1668 (London: Constable, 1891) 67.

²⁶⁸Morier, Journey Through Persia 398.

²⁶⁹Morier, Ayesha 176.

sentenced to drink a pint of brandy on the spot.²⁷¹ This explains Buchan's observation of the people of Hunza: "Food and wine were going the round, for the Maulai Muhammadans have no taboos in eating and drinking".²⁷² In Hull's, novel the Sheikh also says "Excuse me. I do not drink wine. It is my only virtue", "She [the captive English lady] had forgotten that he was an Arab".²⁷³

Lytton, in Ismael, writing of another ruler who disobeys the instruction:

"See the pale tyrant in his lofty tow'rs,
In reckless revelry employ his hours;
No blood, though torrents round his dwelling roll,
Dims the forbidden sparkle of the bowl.

Lytton, in a note, then clarifies the fact that wine is forbidden by the Muslim religion.²⁷⁴ Thomas Moore also refers to the old idea of wine-pouring *houris*:

And kindled up your souls, now sunk and dim
With that pure wine the Dark-ey'd Maids above
Keep, seal'd with precious musk, for those they
love.²⁷⁵

Moore is referring here to the quoted Qur'anic *ayah* 83:25 in which there is mention of the wine, but the houris have been added by Moore, as is clear from the actual *ayah*.

AL-LAWH-AL-MAHFUZ

Another interesting idea is mentioned incessantly by writers when describing the Muslim belief in the divinity of the Qur'an. According to the Muslims there is a division of opinion amongst them regarding the interpretation of

²⁷⁰Frazer, Kuzzilbash, 2:12.

²⁷¹James A. Froude, The Two Chiefs of Dunboy (London: Longmans, 1891) 280-305.

²⁷²John Buchan, Half-Hearted (London: Isbister, 1900) 240.

²⁷³Hull, 86.

²⁷⁴Edward B. Lytton, Ismael, an Oriental Tale. (London: Hatchard, 1820) 17.

²⁷⁵Moore, Lalla Rookh 386.

the *ayah* describing the Qur'an to be preserved in *Al-Lawh-al-Mahfuz* or imperishable tablet. This difference is the result of on the one hand taking the words "imperishable tablet" in the literal rather than metaphorical sense. Such a description in the Qur'an is to be found only once:

Nay, but this [divine writ which they reject] is a
discourse sublime, upon an imperishable tablet
[inscribed]. (85:21-22)

The other opinion argues that the phrase has always had a metaphorical meaning "namely, an allusion to the imperishable quality of this divine writ". Upholders of the belief justify their interpretation by quoting Tabari, Baghawi, Razi or Ibn Kathir as being unanimous in describing the phrase as "God's promise that the Qur'an would never be corrupted, and would remain free of all arbitrary additions, diminutions and textual changes".²⁷⁶

The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam, also explains that the term "guarded tablet" has become a term for metaphysical substance, like Aristotle's hyle and that the corresponding Islamic term for metaphysical form is the "Pen" as is the Greek 'eidos'. The tablet is also the repository of destiny (*al-qadr*), giving rise to the expression it is "written" (*maktub*) for something fated'.²⁷⁷

Equally adamant was the other school of thought propounded by Islahi, which believed in the chapters of the Qur'an being the same as in *Al Lawh al Mahfuz*. This opinion projects the belief that the Angel Gabriel used to make Muhammad recite the full Qur'an annually during the month of *Ramadan* while *hadith* point to the arrangement by Uthman's Committee. Since the difference in

²⁷⁶Asad, 943.

²⁷⁷Glasse, see "al-Laugh-al-Mahfuz" 243.

interpretation is not a deeply divisive matter and the division is not critical for the understanding of the Qur'an and since both sides agree on the irrefutable quality of the Qur'an, it has been allowed to exist. However this division of Muslim opinion was also to be reflected and expanded upon by western writers.

Speaking of the Qur'an, Simon Ockley was to explain the term 'secret Book' as meaning that which according to the Muslims is a Heavenly register in which all God's Decrees and the future is written.²⁷⁸ Gibbon presents an even more graphic description when he says the Qur'an is "inscribed with a pen of light" and "A paper copy, in a volume of silk and gems, was brought down to the lowest heaven by the angel Gabriel".²⁷⁹ Green, whose book is based on the view that Islam is a closer heresy than others of Christianity, and whose study goes beyond the life of the Prophet and continues up to modern times, says that the Arabic fable regarding the "Koran" is that the original existed in heaven near God's throne and was brought to the lowest heaven by Gabriel and that the Prophet saw it once every year, bound in silk and adorned with gold and precious stones.²⁸⁰ T.P.Hughes, in his Dictionary Of Islam of 1885, says "In the Hadis and in the theological works it is used to denote the tablet on which the decrees of God were recorded".²⁸¹ Noldeke provides a more rational approach by referring to sources from the Qur'an itself but does not specify which copy or translation he uses. In substance, however, his statement implies the same, that of the prevalence of a

²⁷⁸Ockley, 1: 174.

²⁷⁹Gibbon, 3: 85.

²⁸⁰Green, 148.

²⁸¹Thomas P. Hughes, A Dictionary of Islam Being a Cyclopaedia of the Doctrines, Rites, Ceremonies and Customs, of the Muhammadan Religion (Lahore: Premier, 1986) 285.

'mother copy'.²⁸² Adding further details to this description, William Beckford, in the fictional Vathek, says that the first transcript has been from everlasting by His throne, written on a tablet of immense size, called the preserved tablet; on which are also recorded the divine decrees, past and future.²⁸³

ANGELS

The Muslim belief in Divine help through the intervention of supernatural beings has always been of great interest to western writers. According to general Muslim belief it was during the first battle of the Muslims against the Pagans, when the odds were heavily against them and failure seemed imminent, that the Prophet prayed to Allah and called upon Him to provide divine intervention. Then he hurled a handful of pebbles at the enemy, and gave the order to charge. This incident is recorded in the Qur'an as:

(9) Lo! You were praying unto your Sustainer for aid, whereupon He thus responded to you: "I shall, verily, aid you with a thousand angels following one upon another!" (10) And God ordained this only as a glad tiding, and that your hearts should thereby be set at rest - since no succour can come from any save God: verily, God is almighty, wise!" (11) [Remember how it was] when he caused inner calm to enfold you, as an assurance from Him, and sent down upon you water from the skies, so that He might purify you thereby and free you from Satan's unclean whisperings and strengthen your hearts and thus make firm your steps.

The Divine order issued to the angels is also recorded as:

²⁸²Noldeke, 22.

²⁸³William Beckford, Vathek an Arabian Tale (London: Swift, 1912) 215.

Lo! Thy sustainer inspired the angels [to convey this His message to the believers]: "I am with you!" [And He commanded the angels:] "And give firmness unto those who have attained to faith [with these words from Me]: 'I shall cast terror into the hearts of those who are bent on denying the truth; (8: 9-12)

Once again there is a reminder for all concerned:

And yet, [O believers,] it was not you who slew the enemy, but it was God who slew them; and it was not thou who cast [terror into them, O Prophet], when thou didst cast it, but it was God who cast it: and [He did all this] in order that He might test the believers by a goodly test of His Own ordaining. Verily, God is all-hearing, all-knowing! (8:17)

Asad quotes from Razi and Rida that the aid of the angels was purely spiritual in nature and that there is no evidence in the Qur'an of their legendary physical participation.²⁸⁴

Since there has been disagreement in the belief of the Muslims themselves the western writers have also basically resonated it. Moore refers to the help of the angels in times of great need, as during the first major battle of the Muslims against the Pagans:

A warrior, (like those angel youths who led,
In glorious panoply of Heaven's own mail,
The Champions of the Faith through BEDER'S vale,
285

Parallel to this literal reading has been the equally strong opinion that the help these angels provided was metaphorical as these powers only belong to Allah and to no other entity (8:17).²⁸⁶

According to Asad, Harut and Marut must be considered metaphorically as

²⁸⁴Asad, see foot-note 21: 241.

²⁸⁵Moore, Lalla Rookh 378.

²⁸⁶Asad, see foot-note 19: 240.

either two angels or kingly persons who practised sorcery in Ancient Babylon, reputedly the home of magic arts (2:102).²⁸⁷

In western literature Southey also refers to the angels Haruth and Maruth in Thalaba,²⁸⁸ explaining in a note that they are two angels who were sent down to earth to judge the crimes of men, but "did not execute commissions as they ought". Bulwer Lytton in Leila says: "I deemed astrology a part of the science of the two Angels, Harut and Marut."²⁸⁹ Clair - Tisdall explains that these were two angels who offended God and are assigned to a well near Babylon.²⁹⁰

Another concept concerning the after life in which Muslims are often questioned regarding their belief has acquired subsequent embellishment amongst both Muslims and non-Muslims. It is mentioned in the Qur'an that the angels will enquire of a deceased regarding his or her deeds in the life they have just left. The relevant *ayahs* are:

(50) the angels will strike their faces and their
backs, and [will say]: "Taste suffering through fire
(51) in return for what your own hands have
wrought-" (8:50)

The references in *hadith* or traditions concerning these angels only mention that they will question the deceased regarding their belief. The names Munkar and Nakir which denote astonishment, are not mentioned in the Qur'an but appear in Tirmizi's *hadith*. However this concept has provided prodigious material for western writers as can be observed from the following quotations and examples.

²⁸⁷Asad, see foot-note 83: 21.

²⁸⁸Southey, Works 4: 138 .

²⁸⁹Lytton, Leila 6.

²⁹⁰Clair-Tisdall, 34.

In Lalla Rookh Thomas Moore compares the dread inspired by Mokanna's voice to that of Monker's, the angel which is supposed to wake the dead in their graves and inquire about their deeds: "...when a voice deep and dread As that of MONKER, waking up the dead".²⁹¹ Byron, in The Giaour, also refers to this belief and writes: "Beneath avenging Monkir's scythe". He gives a complicated explanation regarding the horrors of the grave in which he describes Monkir and Ankir as pulling the dead by the head (because of which a tuft of hair is always left on the crown of their head) and making him kneel in order to interrogate him. At an unfavourable answer they smite him with a mace of fire and depart.²⁹² The forementioned Qur'anic *ayahs* may have originated these ideas but there is no source for the added detail regarding the tuft of hair which is used by some writers, and this is obviously foreign to the Qur'an.

The ordeals of the Muslim after life were recorded in Charles and Mary Lamb's collection of stories called Mrs Leicester's School. A story called "The Young Mahometan" has an interesting account of a young girl who reads Mahometanism Explained. The child is greatly influenced by the description of *Pul Sirat* (which is a narrow bridge across hell-fire, that can only be crossed by Muslims free of sin before entering paradise) and of Ismael being described as a "Mahometan". She convinces herself that she is also a "Mahometan" in order to escape those perils of death and secretly wishes her mother to be one also. The anxious girl falls ill, and is taken to the doctor's home where she takes a month to recover.²⁹³ The fears

²⁹¹Moore, Lalla Rookh 373.

²⁹²Byron, 171.

²⁹³Charles and Mary Lamb, Mrs Leicester's School (London: Dent, 1899) 167.

that the poor child undergoes probably result from all those harrowing and exaggerated details of Muslim theology which she had read.

CONCLUSION

Whatever their mode of thinking may be, there is one point on which the Muslims are unanimous and that is the validity of the Qur'an and the veneration it inspires.

Scott describes the Saracen's reaction at the sight of Saladin's seal, as he bends his head to the dust, kissing it with profound respect and pressing it to his forehead. Scott's fictional account is both accurate and inaccurate. This kind of veneration is accorded to the Qur'an, but it excludes bending in the dust, which is associated with prayer only.²⁹⁴ Muslims are in total agreement when Lucas quotes Ibn Khallikan as saying: "... God has allowed no book to be faultless except His noble Koran".²⁹⁵ This assent results from their belief that the Qur'an is the divine word, rather than the implied idea, in which God does not allow of perfection.

It is obvious that there is much that is unknown to the Muslims as well as to non-Muslims, and since the Qur'an continuously refers to those who think, the striving for attaining closer knowledge is always there. The interpretation of allegorical passages refers to those which deal with metaphysical subjects such as God's attributes, the ultimate meaning of time and eternity, the resurrection of the dead, the Day of Judgement, paradise and hell and the nature of forces such as

²⁹⁴Walter Scott, The Talisman (London: Nelsons, 1901) 22.

²⁹⁵Edward V. Lucas, A Boswell of Baghdad (London: Methuen, 1919). 89 Henceforth Boswell.

angels.²⁹⁶ Asad explains that the allegorical or symbolic meaning of terms in the Qur'an, such as the reference to "a realm which is beyond the reach of human perception", is the base for all truly religious cognition and that only a small segment of reality is open to man's perception and imagination. A larger part escapes his comprehension altogether. The Qur'an also declares that:

SAY: "If all the sea were ink for my Sustainer's words, the sea would indeed be exhausted ere my Sustainer's words are exhausted! And [thus it would be] if we were to add to it sea upon sea." (18:109)

Being aware of the human propensity for controversy, the Qur'an foresees the divisions in the perceptions of those coming in contact with it and urges patience and to await the final denouement.

(13) Behold, this [divine writ] is indeed a word that cuts between truth and falsehood, (14) and is no idle tale. (15) Behold, they [who refuse to accept it] devise many a false argument [to disprove its truth]; (16) but I shall bring all their scheming to nought. Let, then, the deniers of the truth have their will: let them have their will for a little while! (86:13-16)

As the Qur'an exhorts everyone to use their faculties of cognisance towards attaining the truth, it also makes clear that even the Muslims cannot give definite opinions regarding the meaning of the *ayahs* contained in the Qur'an. This makes it inevitable that there will always be differences of view regarding the ultimate Truth which is beyond the reach of man. Alternatively after a study of the various misconceptions one generalisation which can be made, is that in the nineteenth century very few original criticisms of the Qur'an were made. Those which have prevailed for a long time have resulted in a collection of stereotypes which have

²⁹⁶Asad, see foot-note 8: 67.

become exhausted material for discussion. The Muslims have, among themselves, discussed the relevant issues until they are threadbare. In order to extricate interlocution from the morass of the existing stalemate, and to promote a meaningful dialogue, the detractors of the Qur'an would have to dispense with polemics and unnecessary prejudice. Consequently the proponents would have to develop the courage to face scrutiny. Once this two pronged approach is developed the cause of truth and knowledge will have been set on a course that can only be beneficial to posterity.

CHAPTER VI - MUHAMMAD

The study of the Qur'an as a source of misunderstandings between the western and Muslim world would be incomplete if it did not include the Prophet Muhammad and of the effect he has on his followers as well as detractors. Muhammad is unique amongst Prophets in having several collections of detailed contemporary reports about him. These reports provide the Muslim viewpoint about those aspects of the Prophet's life which feature persistently in the works of western writers and have been selected for detailed study.

LITERARY BACKGROUND

Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, has been the subject of controversy among non-Muslims ever since he announced the revelation of the Qur'an, at Mecca more than 1400 years ago. Over the ages, and particularly in the nineteenth century, his reputation has withstood charges of the most virulent and varying nature from those inimical to his religion. The most favourable response he recently had in the western world was the description of being "the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels".²⁹⁷ Such conclusions had been drawn very reluctantly and even today the Encyclopaedia Britannica only documents him as the founder of a religion rather than as a Prophet. As with other such personalities the variations in perception can be attributed to innumerable effects that happened to impinge upon the time and

²⁹⁷Michael H. Hart The 100 a Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History (New York: A & W, 1978). see "Muhammad".

person involved. This led to the prevalence of erroneous ideas, many of which have continued to survive and have subsequently been accepted as factual information.

The distorted story of Muhammad presented in English Literature began in the Middle Ages and continued unchanged into the Renaissance and beyond. The basis was the continuing hostility between east and west which transferred into Christian contrariety towards Islam, an attitude which was reinforced by the Crusades. Mahoun was a variation of Muhammad as were Mawmet, Mahound, Macon and Makomete.²⁹⁸ This grotesque concept associated with these names was so potent that it left its mark on the language and "Mammet" used to mean idol during the Middle Ages. There have been various discussions on the origin of the transformation of this name in Notes And Queries, a popular literary periodical which still survives. The discussions began with a challenge by J.D. Campbell to the common notion that Maumetry = Idolatry is derived from Mahomet.²⁹⁹ In a later issue W.Barnes was in agreement with the concept that M+M as in mum meant to make up-as an image, hence Mummers, Christmas boy-actors".³⁰⁰ In another edition, A.R. Bayley took umbrage with the explanation that Baphomet, is (a) a medieval form of Mahomet (b) the alleged name of the idol which the Templars were accused of worshipping. It was described as a cabalistically formed version of 'tem.o.h.p.ab (spelt backwards). This was a Latin abbreviation of abbot or father of the temple of peace of all men. This writer argued that the Templars

²⁹⁸Smith English 3.

²⁹⁹Notes & Queries vol. 6, 3rd Series.(9 July 1864): 28.

³⁰⁰Notes & Queries vol. 6, 3rd Series (23 July 1864): 75.

could not have embalmed the name of their religious foe and that therefore this explanation must be rejected.³⁰¹ However in a later issue, quoting Dr. Brewer in Phrase and Fable, Thomas Bayne pointed out that Māhoun was defined as "a name of contempt for Mahomet, a Muslim, a Moor", with the additional information that "in Scotland it used to mean devil" as it continues to be defined in present day dictionaries. He also stated that Robert Burns (1759-1796) immortalised "auld Mahoun" and that in Scottish practice it continues to be a descriptive title for Satan.³⁰² Scott echoed it in the Talisman when the hermit Theodrick of Engaddi, says: "Down with Mahound, Termagount, and all their adherents".³⁰³ Disraeli who was usually circumspect, describes Muslims as "those followers of Mahound", who continued to retain their faith to the consternation of Christendom.³⁰⁴ Even Tennyson, after reading an article in the newspaper wrote in despair about the youth of his age, said: "Better wild Mahmoud's war- cry once again!/ O fools, we want a manlike God and Godlike men" where Mahmoud is equated with Muhammad.³⁰⁵ Tennyson used the term again in his late play *Becket* 1894 in Act II scene II when he described "Knights, bishops, earls, this London spawn- by Mahound,/ I had sooner have been born a Mussalman-/ Less clashing with their priests-".³⁰⁶ The fact that priesthood does not exist in Islam would have made the

³⁰¹Notes & Queries vol. 114, 9th Series, (3 March 1900): 167.

³⁰²Notes & Queries vol. 156, 9th Series, (22 Dec. 1900): 505.

³⁰³Scott, Talisman 44.

³⁰⁴Benjamin Disraeli, Tancred (London: Davies, 1927) 231.

³⁰⁵Ricks, Tennyson 1006.

³⁰⁶Tennyson, Works 671

situation even more edifying by eliminating controversial opinion. Even the enlightened Thackeray described the Turks as the "followers of Mahound."³⁰⁷

In pursuance of this grotesque image of the Prophet, some writers resorted to the use of vestigial effects of what had apparently been part of the mythology of the Middle-Ages; such as the rumour of the suspension of Muhammad's tomb in mid-air³⁰⁸, a misconception which continued to find a place in the imagination of writers like Eliot Warburton with his: "that the solitary ship upon its bosom seems suspended, like Mahomed's coffin, between two skies".³⁰⁹ Thomas Moore's Lalla Rookh again echoed this misconception in the lines: "Half Mistress and half Saint, thou hangst as even as doth / Madina's tomb, 'twixt hell and heaven!"³¹⁰ Even in Scott's the Talisman the female haridan shrills "may my curse rest upon his coffin".³¹¹ Other related fallacies included the story of the pigeon which Muhammad had purportedly trained to whisper in his ear, for the purpose of announcing his revelations, a story which contributed to the idea of the false prophet. Moore refers to this in the second angel's story in The Loves Of The Angels of 1823 with the line, "Fell like the moultings of heaven's Dove".³¹² In a note Moore explained that this dove attended Muhammad as his familiar and whispered in his ear. The poem was based on the oriental tale of Harut and Marut and on certain rabbinical fictions. It was about the loves of three fallen angels for

³⁰⁷Thackeray, Cornhill To Cairo 104.

³⁰⁸Samuel Butler, Hudibras (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1905), 9. Quoted in Smith, 38.

³⁰⁹Eliot Warburton, The Crescent and the Cross; or Romance and Realities of Eastern Travel (London: Henry Colburn, 1845).63, 9.

³¹⁰Moore, Lalla Rookh 359.

³¹¹Scott, Talisman 71.

mortal women, and the decline of the soul from purity. Moore turns to this idea again when he writes of Muhammad's favourite pigeon nestling between the pages of the Qur'an in the introduction to his story of Paradise and The Peri (1817). This poem describes the attempts of a fairy to gain entry to heaven, which involve the search for a tear from the eye of a repentant prisoner.³¹³

It is important to point out that these stories of the tomb and the pigeon were only found in the works of western writers, and were completely unknown in the place of their assumed origin. That is why there is no Muslim version of the event and explains why we are forced to depend on western writers for further clarification of these tales.

Both Edward Gibbon and Thomas Carlyle peremptorily dismissed these stories as fantasies unworthy of mention. Gibbon attributed the story of the tomb to the Greeks and Romans and called it "vulgar and ridiculous".³¹⁴ Carlyle was to comment that these tales were unproved, and were the result of well meaning zeal that was "...disgraceful to ourselves only".³¹⁵

Even Burton was to fall prey to the fallacy of the pigeon and write that: "The Moslems connect the pigeon on two occasions with their faith: first, when that bird appeared to whisper in Muhammad's ear; and, secondly, during the flight to Al-Madinah".³¹⁶ The first part of Burton's explanation has been shown to be

³¹²Thomas Moore, The Poetical Works of Thomas Moore (London: Oxford UP, 1910) 554. Henceforth Works.

³¹³Moore, Lalla Rookh 392.

³¹⁴Gibbon, 3:113.

³¹⁵Thomas Carlyle, On Heroes Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History (London: Chapman, n.d.) 217.

³¹⁶Burton, 2:175.

the result of fabrication, while the second is in fact in keeping with Muslim belief and also finds mention in an incomplete poem "Mohammed" which Coleridge and Southey had agreed to write as a joint venture. According to Muhammed Asfour, Southey's various plans for the poem "Mohammed" also included the idea of making a historically minor character into a striking personage because she attempted to poison the Prophet.³¹⁷ The passage relevant to the story of the pigeon is "...There is none in the hole of the mountain; For lo! a pigeon fled from her nest at the sound of my coming".³¹⁸ This is supposed to be the remark of one of the Pagan pursuers of Muhammad and Abu Bakr during their secret flight from Mecca to Madina . The Prophet and his friend hid in a cave in the desert where their enemy followed them. Just outside their hiding place the Pagan found two pigeons in a nest as well as a cobweb covering the mouth of the cave. Seeing these creatures the hunter presumed that nobody could be inside and continued his search in another direction. This nocturnal escape to Madina was eventually to mark the Hejira, the beginning of the Islamic calendar.

Richard Burton tried to explain the suspension theory, either as Carsten Niebuhr 1733-1815 the German traveller accounted for it, as a misconstrued deduction from the drawings of the positions of the graves of the Prophet and his two Companions; or by a conjecture "that the mass of rock popularly described as hanging unsupported in the mosque of Omar at Jerusaloem" was confused with the Tomb at Madina.³¹⁹

³¹⁷Asfour, 106.

³¹⁸Southey, Works 10: 239

³¹⁹Burton, 1: 325.

The development of such fables is not unexpected in situations where general access to a place is not possible and where an atmosphere of the forbidden is built up. This happened with the case with the two holy cities of Islam, Mecca and Madina, where non-Muslims are excluded from entry. Mecca is comparatively more open and the sacred sites like the Kaabah, which was built by Abraham and is in close vicinity to the scene of Hagar's frantic search for water for her son Ismail, are also familiar to other religions. In comparison, the exclusively Muslim Prophet's grave at Madina, next to those of two of his trusted friends and successors Abu Bakr and Umar, is closeted and even Muslims in general are not allowed direct access to it. Thus an atmosphere of mystery is built around it, and the circulation of fabricated stories and descriptions is therefore facilitated. This secrecy, combined with the need to find the secret of the success of Muhammad's mission may have also prompted the unsuccessful attempt at burrowing there through a tunnel, during the reign of Nur-ud Din Zangi. This tunnel, which nearly reached the chamber of the Prophet's tomb, was dug by two priests living in Madina disguised as Muslims. The enforced exclusivity results from a requirement of security for the graves as well as from a wish to limit the excess of reverence that the Prophet arouses among Muslims. Emotional worshippers could easily transfer reverence into worship appropriate for a deity. This was a practice which Muhammad himself was loath to contemplate and which he refused to allow even in his lifetime. It would have been a total denial of his mission as a Messenger of God only.

Hostile chroniclers (finding very little in the Qur'an that could be disputed)³²⁰ deliberately selected the personality of the Prophet for attack and spared no effort to malign him. If the details of his life did not provide enough material then there was nothing to withhold them from inventing some. This was done freely in the Risalah or Apology by Abd al-Masih b. Ishaq al Kindi, written in the eleventh Century by an Arab Christian, as the name implies. This was another source about Muhammad's life which reached Europe through Spain. Highly inaccurate, it basically selected some details about Muhammad in order to reveal him as self-indulgent and a murderer. The aim of the work was the defamation and distortion desired by the hostile Peter of Toledo. Though the Risalah was an unknown tract, it was circulated by the Turkish Mission Society. The tract achieved its purpose so well that it was republished by Muir in London in 1887 under the auspices of the Society For Promoting Christian Knowledge. This constancy in popularity amongst the reading public, illustrates that there was very little change in the desire for authentic knowledge about the Prophet. Muir provided another biography of Muhammad which was based on more authentic accounts, albeit interpreted according to his own bias.

There have been numerous attempts to malign Muhammad but, as has been observed above, there is always more than one point of view. The Muslim view regards the Prophet as the perfect man, who was chosen to be the Messenger of God by virtue of the qualities he displayed in his ordinary life. Beginning with a handful of followers, he led his nation to become one of the foremost powers of

³²⁰Al-Hamoud, 46.

the time. Throughout all these challenging years he retained the common touch, while displaying generalship, statecraft and justice. Within his lifetime he laid the basis of a complete society, which was to guide his followers to spread their influence over a major part of the world at a phenomenal pace.

PERSONALITY

Non-Muslim observers were, however, constantly questioning all evidence concerning the Prophet. The method most widely used by the Prophet's detractors was to question the truth of the claim of Prophethood by declaring Muhammad an imposter. The inevitable epithet was used by Ockley who begins the first chapter of his book with "Mahomet, the great Imposter, and Founder of the Saracenic Empire, died at Medinah".³²¹ Ockley also describes Islam as a new superstition which Muhammad pretended to have received by inspiration from God.³²² Writing about a totally different part of the world, Bernier, in his Travels, pleaded for Christian Missionaries to be financed by Europeans and not by those in India, even though he despaired of the Muslims ever being converted, or that they would "be persuaded that Mahomet was a false prophet".³²³ Gibbon's work on Muhammad was used as standard reference by most of the western writers of the nineteenth century. Setting aside his theological overtone and philosophical arguments, Gibbon kept closer to the Muslim historical version of events than his predecessors, but his interpretations of these events caused them to lose objectivity. He makes a major break from both versions, when he says that Muhammad's father died in his

³²¹Ockley, 1: 1.

early infancy but corrects this in a note to a few months before his birth,³²⁴ as does Irving³²⁵ when the generally accepted information is that Muhammad was born as orphan. It does not make any difference to any theological argument, there is no substantial reason for this change from the norm, and it seems quite unnecessary. Muslims have been unanimous regarding the posthumous birth of the Prophet.

Gibbon described the personality of the Prophet in paradoxical terms, for him Muhammad possessed the courage both of thought and action, but that the frankness of his manner concealed the artifice of his views.³²⁶ Writers such as Muir and others were to echo this to varying degrees. Muir refers to "pious frauds" being allowed in Islam as the Prophet himself encouraged this notion in the furtherance of Islam.³²⁷ Bosworth-Smith in a comparatively sympathetic account has to qualify his acceptance of Muhammad's prophecy as being flawed by the weaknesses of his character.³²⁸ Noldeke's assessment was that Muhammad cannot be called a great man in spite of the fault that his religion is the "most important manifestation the Semitic genius ever made".³²⁹

IMPOSTER

The conflict arose from the inability of the non-Muslim writer to assign the status of Prophet to Muhammad, something which could be traced to Gibbon's

³²²Ockley, preface, 1: 13.

³²³Bernier, 290.

³²⁴Gibbon, 3: 77.

³²⁵Irving, 1: 39.

³²⁶Gibbon, 3: 79.

³²⁷Muir, introduction lviii.

³²⁸R. Bosworth Smith, Mohammed and Mohammedanism Lectures delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain in February and March 1874. (London: Smith, 1876) 155.

ambivalence when he said that the faith of Islam, which Muhammad preached, "THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD, AND MUHAMMAD IS THE APOSTLE OF GOD", was compounded of an eternal truth and a necessary fiction.³³⁰ This error results in the negation of half of the creed of Islam, which is based on the tenet that there is but one God and Mohammed is His Messenger. Osborn's explanation of this, the first of the five fundamentals of faith, was to stray even further from the truth. Contrary to his exposition on the "linking of names"³³¹ in the Muslim profession of faith, Muhammad never associated himself with God or claimed equality, and disobedience to the Prophet is not equally punishable with disobedience to God. In Islam the two do not have an equal claim upon the love and submission of men. The worship of God supersedes all.

Eventually the literature of the Nineteenth century began to express a more tolerant attitude. At this period a more open approach was introduced, as Stobart informs us by quoting from Freeman's History of the Saracens "It is no longer thought, any part of the duty of a Christian writer to see nothing but wickedness and imposture in the author of the great antagonistic creed".³³² That the misconceptions nevertheless persisted, as can be seen in Lytton's criticism of Voltaire who according to Lytton depicts Muhammad as "only an ambitious imposter, whom he drags on the stage as a philosophical expositor of the wiles and

³²⁹Noldeke, 6.

³³⁰Gibbon, 3: 81.

³³¹Osborn, 91.

³³²J.W.H Stobart, Islam and its Founder (New York: Young, 1895) 64.

crimes of priestcraft".³³³ Other writers, like Allardyce, employed the angry retort of "The Muhammadan blackguards, the sons of impure mothers, the swine of the false Prophet".³³⁴ Green was filled with wonder at the meteoric rise of the Prophet's "career" which he described as the "...rapid growth, the wide diffusion, and the enduring permanence of the Mahometan imposture" which could only be achieved by the special providence of God.³³⁵ Osborn also wrote about Waraqa the Christian cousin of the Prophet's first wife Khadija, whose reassuring advice was sought when Muhammad first received the revelation. Osborn said that initially Waraqa conceded Muhammad's claims but, when he resorted to wild legends attributing them to the book of Moses and others, then Waraqa denounced Muhammad as an imposter and withdrew to Abyssinia and became a Christian.³³⁶

There were very few western writers who were to propound a view other than that generally held or to exhibit independent thinking regarding Islam. The most notable among these exceptions was Thomas Carlyle who questioned the popular view publicly in his series of lectures. The series was concerned with the hero in different roles and in context Carlyle praised the personality of the Prophet, even though he disparaged the Qur'an. Writing from Chelsea on 2-7-1840 to Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) Carlyle said that his lecture on Muhammad astonished the audience, since he declared that Muhammad was not a quack, "my poor Mahomet was wheat with barn sweepings...and though "all quacks are but

³³³E.B.Lytton, The Poetical and Dramatic Works of Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, Bart 5 Vols. (London: Chapman, 1852) Lytton Prose Works "On Some Authors In Whose Writings Knowledge Of The World Is Eminently Displayed " 465.

³³⁴Alexander Allardyce, The City of Sunshine 4 vols.(Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1877) 2:22.

³³⁵Samuel Green, The Life of Mahomet 2 vols. (London: Tegg, 1811) 220.

chaff, Nature had allowed the wheat to grow as well". His audience was perplexed by his favourable opinion of Muhammad and Carlyle wished that he had more time to lecture on the subject.³³⁷ Much later Shaw was also to state, in The Adventures Of The Black Girl In Her Search For God 1932 that, six hundred years after Jesus, Mahomet founded Islam and made a colossal stride ahead from mere stock-and-stone idolatory to a very enlightened Unitarianism.³³⁸ But to do this effectively according to Shaw in On Days Of Judgement The Simpleton Of The Unexpected Isles 1934, Muhammad required a "Celestial postman" for maintaining discipline and adherence amongst the Arabs.³³⁹

The confusing nature of these accounts arises from the inability of non-Muslim writers to assign the status of Prophet to Muhammad. According to Muslims, Muhammad must have been worthy to have Divine trust bestowed on him. Until he claimed Prophethood he was unanimously awarded the sobriquet of Al-Amin, the trustworthy, by the Meccans. After his Prophethood criticisms were poured onto him by his detractors. Such arbitrary denigrations were eventually to find their way into the works of inimical writers, irrespective of the age in which they were written. However it would have to be an extraordinary personality who, even according to his detractors, "should have founded an extensive empire over the minds, as well as the persons, of millions of the human race; and that this dominion should have been continued for more than twelve hundred years

³³⁶Osborn, 6.

³³⁷Charles E. Norton ed, The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson (1834-1872) 2 vols. (Boston : Ticknor, 1886) 1: 319.

³³⁸Shaw, Prefaces 653.

³³⁹Shaw, Prefaces 636

presented a phenomenon which increased wonder the more steadily it was contemplated".³⁴⁰ It was concluded that it could only have been achieved by the special providence of God³⁴¹, which also endorses Muslim belief.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ARABIC LITERATURE

TRADITIONS

Most of the material regarding the history of Islam and the Prophet's life is drawn from the Qur'an and from Muslim sources made up of traditions, exegeses and historical records. Some Byzantine records are extant but these are insubstantial and all writers have to resort to a comparison of indigenous writers. In spite of this monopoly over original material there was room for a diversity of views to develop amongst Muslim writers because of the style of collation. This problem was further complicated by differences in the status of religious authenticity of the extant documents, and it is not surprising to find the general reader greatly bewildered by what he contemplates.

Conversely, informed Muslims are very clear about the different degrees of reverence they assign to the words of God which are found in the Qur'an and the words of Muhammad which are included in the *hadith* or traditions, and nowhere do they confuse the two. Using the words of Margoliouth "there is no colouring

³⁴⁰Green, preface vi.

³⁴¹Green, 220.

by the medium". Explanation in Muslim theology is unlike the Christian practice of explaining discrepancies in their Scriptures.³⁴² This is what people with limited understanding of the religion cannot comprehend, and they consequently present an inaccurate picture of the Muslim psyche. This perplexity is made obvious in the following quotation from the book A Boswell Of Baghdad by E.V. Lucas:

A Traditionalist was a learned man intimate with the KORAN whose duty it was to separate the spurious traditions from the true which so naturally would have collected around such a figure as Muhammad.³⁴³

Indeed a Tradionalist was a learned man intimate with the Qur'an whose voluntary duty was to record and separate the spurious details about the Prophet's life and sayings, other than those which were uttered by Muhammad as Qur'an revelations.

This distinction may not be very clear for outside observers but it is of the utmost importance for Muslims for whom even the use of language is different. Muslim belief avers that the Qur'an is the final revelation of God. It is completely devoid of the words of Muhammad, which are assigned to a different collection, called the *hadith* or traditions. Qur'anic revelations were differentiated from *hadith* in obvious ways such as mode of transmission, content and language. The *hadith* were collected about a century after the death of the Prophet while the Qur'an was recorded simultaneously upon revelation. It is when certain *ayahs* of the Qur'an needed to be translated into action or explained in detail, as was the duty of the Messenger to do, that his words were recorded. Those actions which

³⁴²Margoliouth, 63.

were imbibed by the community as a whole are called the *sunnah*, and continue to be universal. There was some advice pertinent to individual cases, that was sought in private, and was in turn narrated to other members of the community. These are also included in the *hadith* or traditions, and by the mode of narrative collection these elements were numerous and varied. The only exceptions to the delayed collection of *hadith* were the treaties and letters or other arbitrary collections of the Prophet's sayings that some contemporaries may have privately recorded as *suhuf*. As poetry recorded the events of history and is considered to be the register of the Arabs; some material may have been found in the works of the two poets Muhammad appointed to answer the criticism of the Meccans. Hassan b. Thabit counteracted tribal criticism while Abdullah b. Rawaha dealt with the believer-unbeliever issues.

The collections or *suhuf* were continued by the next generation till the ban was lifted. The ban regarding *hadith* which had been imposed in order to preserve the authenticity of the Qur'an was lifted at the end of the first century after the death of the Prophet. At this time a single writer's work was collated regardless of subject matter. Traditions, history and biography of the Prophet were developed simultaneously and collected on the spot. These topics were separated only in the second century after the Prophet's death when the specialisation of subjects took place. Many apocryphal traditions were also incorporated and diligent efforts were made to sift these out. In collecting the *hadith* Muslim traditionalists tended to stretch the term of intellectual honesty to its utmost limit. They memorised

³⁴³Lucas, Boswell 89.

multiple narrators of a tradition up to the Prophet's time. A tradition need not necessarily be traced to the Prophet and the source could be any Companion or *Sahaba* as they are called. The *Sahaba* are greatly revered and are followed by the next generation who are called the *Tabiun*. Usually one narrator has several traditions regarding the same matter with minor variations. The reader is allowed to reach his own conclusion as there is no definitive answer. This task is further complicated by the fact that these *hadith* are recorded as isolated events and the context within which they were formulated is not provided. According to some collections of hadith which are regarded by Muslims as authentic, there are certain books of traditions that are regarded as valid. All of these were collated by religious scholars, who introduced new material, as well as repeating that found in the works of others. The validity or authenticity was to qualify the narrator and not the content of the *hadith*. In spite of the hazards associated with the collection of the *hadith*, they are necessary for illustrating the words of the Qur'an. In isolation they can never be regarded with the same reverence as that accorded to the Qur'an, yet they cannot be dismissed outright either. It is possible the words may never have been said by the Prophet or they may include some of his words, equally they may be true.³⁴⁴ There are three kinds of traditions or *hadith*.

1. Those which have reasonable ground for being genuine are accepted as such.
2. Popular traditions not contrary to the usual course of nature and neither proved or disproved are not rejected or relied upon.

³⁴⁴S.Ahmed, 7.

3. Those that appear impossible, were proved false and apocryphal, are entirely rejected.

Scholars used to study the narrators and take the *hadith* seriously. Keeping these factors in mind they warrant a serious study in the interpolation of the Qur'an. The two in unison also form the basis of the major schools of thought and of Islamic jurisprudence which have survived over the centuries.

It is at this juncture that the difference between Muslim writers and those not belonging to the faith becomes heightened. For Muslims this is essential knowledge, while Ignaz Goldziher, in an erudite work of scholarship, points in the opposite direction, saying that the hadith cannot be taken as a historical document, but as a reflection of the tendencies of the developing community.³⁴⁵

HISTORICAL EVENTS

The Muslim annals of the early period say that, after declaring his claim to Prophethood, Muhammad was futilely dissuaded from continuing with his mission by his opponents through progressively drastic measures. These included many years of starvation during which his clan and supporters were ostracised, forcing many to seek asylum in Christian Abyssinia. This persecution of the Muslims culminated in a concerted assassination attempt against Muhammad, from which he escaped to Madina in 622 which marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar. Those were hard times for all, in total contrast to the levity of the conclusion

³⁴⁵Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, translated by C.R. Barber & S.M. Stern, edited by S.M. Stern 2 vols. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1971) 1: 19

reached in Osborn's account: The Meccan fugitives, in spite of Madinan hospitality faced great hardship. Thirty or seventy of them were homeless and almost naked. They slept under the covered part of the Mosque and depended for food on the charity of the Prophet. To earn a livelihood they "resorted to robbery as a congenial and non disgraceful Arab livelihood". ³⁴⁶

According to Muslim sources in Madina the Muslims were received graciously by the indigenous inhabitants who made a pact of brotherhood with the migrants and shared whatever they owned with them. This was a situation that was bound to create difficulties amongst the various communities living in Madina. The displaced Meccans were grateful for the hospitality they were offered yet were loath to partake of it. Most of them had left flourishing businesses and families back in Mecca and were keen to lay claim to those whenever possible. They had also been restricted by the Qur'an which urged them not to take revenge and to establish worship

Art Thou not aware of those who have been told,
"Curb your hands, and be constant in prayer, and
render the purifying dues". (4:77)

Soon after their migration to Madina, however, the Muslims, who were constantly being discriminated against, were given permission to retaliate against their enemies.

Permission (to fight) is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged-and, verily, God has indeed the power to succour them-:(40) those who have been driven from their homelands against all right for no other reason than their saying, "Our Sustainer is God!" (22:40)

³⁴⁶Osborn, 46.

The Muslim record of the ensuing conflicts is very different to that of non-Muslims as most of the major conflicts during the Prophet's lifetime were based on self defence. This was in keeping with the natural course of events as well as with the Qur'anic injunction which was reiterated a year later allowing the Muslims to fight back when attacked but never to be the aggressors and to cease all hostility when the aggression stopped:

(190) And fight in God's cause against those who wage war against you, but do not commit aggression - for, verily God does not love aggressors....(192) But if they desist - behold, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.(193) Hence fight against them until there is no more oppression and all worship is devoted to God alone; but if they desist, then all hostility shall cease, save against those who (wilfully) do wrong. (2:190-3)

and furthermore by:

Hence, if they do not let you be, and do not offer you peace, and do not stay their hands, seize them and slay them whenever you come upon them: for it is against these that We have clearly empowered you (to make war). (4:91)

However the Muslims were also charged with the duty of displaying kindness and behaving equitably towards those unbelievers who did not harass them.

As for such (of the unbelievers) as do not fight against you on account of (your) faith, and neither drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave towards them with full equity: for, verily, God loves those who act equitably. (60:8)

With the statutes laid out for Muslims under siege the Muslims were bound to observe the rules set out for waging war, and could not have ignored such resounding public Qur'anic injunctions. The permission to resist oppression gave

rise to a few raids by the Muslims on the caravans bearing their goods to or from Mecca but these were mostly inconsequential.

The first major confrontation with the Pagans of Mecca was the battle of Badr which took place on the seventeenth day of Ramadan, the first instituted month of fasting. It would have been a physically taxing time for the Muslim community who would, for the first time have gone without food and water from dawn to dusk, as a religious duty, and they would not have willingly sought to participate in an event that solely depended on their physical strength. Muslim sources claim that it was precipitated by the mustering up of a large army of about a 1000 by the Pagans of Mecca, in anticipation of an ambush by about 300 of the nascent force of the Muslims in Madina. A fierce battle ensued from which the Muslims emerged victorious. It would have been testing the faith of the Muslims to the extreme if the first major trial of their strength were planned halfway through the month of the freshly instituted month of Ramadan. Having to forgo food and drink for the first time from dusk to dawn, continuously for a month, would have diminished the physical capacity of even the most enthusiastic of Muslims. However western writers generally tend to portray it as a battle that arose from a raid. There are great variations amongst western sources about the instigators of the fight. Gibbon gives the generally accepted Muslim version of this, but embellishes it with a detail that cannot be substantiated from Islamic practise. This passage concerns the despoiling and insulting of the corpses of the enemy by the Muslims and their taking of two prisoners.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁷Gibbon, 3:103.

The Muslim accounts of this are totally different. Muhammad H. Haykal, who examined all the extant *sira* and *hadith* literature, narrated an incident in which Muhammad specifically prohibited Umar, the future Caliph, from mutilating a harellipped adversary, a prisoner of Badr, by pulling out his two front teeth to prevent him from speaking against the Prophet in future. Muhammad forbade him from doing this lest God did the same to him even in spite of his position as a Prophet.³⁴⁸ Guillaume has a similar story in his book based on the translation of Ibn Ishaq's version.³⁴⁹ Mutilation was a custom prevalent in those days, and one which Muhammad disapproved of, expressly forbidding it. His uncle's body was mutilated by enemies after the second major battle at Uhud, fought in retaliation for the Pagan defeat at Badr. To remove doubts about this issue in Muslim minds there exists a specific Qur'an verse which qualifies permission to fight by stressing that this was only to be done while keeping God in mind, and that unnecessary cruelty or killing was not to be countenanced:

.....Thus, if anyone commits aggression against you,
attack him just as he has attacked you-but remain
conscious of God, and know that God is with those
who are conscious of Him. (2:194)

Considering the fact that both the opposing armies had close relatives on either side, the charge of mutilation becomes less viable as, had it happened, there would have been great danger of internecine strife within the army. The charge also seems in part to be untenable as it is not recorded by any chronicle on either side and because such an act would have destroyed the nascent Muslim force, something which did not happen. As regards the treatment of prisoners Muir

³⁴⁸Muhammad Husayn Haykal, The Life of Muhammad (Qum: Islamic Studies, 1976) 239.

recorded the deaths of five prisoners.³⁵⁰ The Muslim version is that, apart from four prisoners who were put to death, the rest were kept for ransom, and that those who were literate were given the opportunity of gaining freedom by each teaching a Muslim to read and write (8:70). It is recorded that the Prophet interceded for the captives Bani Hasham to be spared because of their previous kindness to the Muslims when they were proscribed in Mecca.³⁵¹ Most of the Muslim exegetes have not been able to agree on what the *ayahs* 8:67-69 actually mean regarding the taking of prisoners at Badr. Maulana Maududi gives the most plausible explanation, which is that the Muslims were actually supposed to fight to the finish and not to start taking prisoners for ransom or slavery as the danger to them was still so great that it would therefore have been better for them not to have done so. Asad considers these *ayahs* to be an injunction against making slaves of captives. Then there is an *ayah* 8:70 which promises them Allah's forgiveness if there is any goodness in their heart:

(Hence,) O Prophet, say unto the captives who are in your hands: "If God finds any good in your hearts, He will give you something better than all that has been taken from you, and will forgive you your sins: for God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace".
(8:70)

Gibbon provides a curious description which has Muhammad placing himself with Abu Bakr on a throne or pulpit and watching the fracas, something which conjures

³⁴⁹Alfred Guillaume, The Life Of Muhammad (Karachi: Oxford UP, 1987) 312.

³⁵⁰Muir, 220-3.

³⁵¹Haykal, 230.

the image of a Caesar at the Colosseum.³⁵² Muir described this as a hut of palm branches hastily set up.³⁵³

Common sense alone prevents one from believing this to be a credible picture in the light of the paucity of resources, both in terms of material and of manpower, and of the fact that this was described as an impromptu manoeuvre. Generally, however Muslim sources record the erection of a make-shift shelter of palm leaves, under which the Prophet spent the night before the battle, but they also describe Muhammad as urging and participating alongside his soldiers.

JEWISH TRIBES

There is considerable disagreement in the narratives about Muhammad's dealings with the three Jewish tribes which formed part of the Madinan confederation.

The Muslim version is that there was always an uneasy truce between the Muslims and the Jews in Madina. After the battle at Badr the latter were greatly disconcerted and told Muhammad that he owed his victory to the inexperience of the pagans. If he were to confront them, it would be a different matter, as they were men to be feared. Shortly afterwards a Muslim woman was insulted by a Jewish jeweller, and both the Muslim who came to her assistance and the jeweller were killed in the fray. Muir and Irving have a similar account. The matter could have been settled with Muhammad's arbitration but the Qaynuqa refused this and decided to teach the Muslims a lesson. They fortified themselves in their homes in

³⁵²Gibbon, 3: 102.

³⁵³Muir, 214.

the hope that their allies would come to their assistance. They were immediately surrounded by a force much larger than expected, and had to declare an unconditional surrender after two weeks. As a result of their breaking the treaty, they had to forfeit all their possessions and face exile. Gibbon records only those narratives which describes one side of the conflict. Taking the tribes successively he says that the Qaynuqa were the victims of an "accidental tumult" and says that, after an unequal conflict, they were fortunate to depart without their riches but with their lives.³⁵⁴ Muslims were to give similar descriptions. Taylor and Margoliouth differ from Gibbon and are more detailed in depicting the incident. Green in Mahomet describes the cause as the growing animosity over the change in *keblah* which culminated when an accidental tumult gave Muhammad the opportunity to demand their unconditional submission or to do battle. The Jews faced this unequal conflict for several days till their friends intervened on their behalf and they escaped leaving their arms and treasure.³⁵⁵ Osborn recorded this event as: Muhammad reneging on his treaty with the Qaynuqa, after receiving a revelation against them. He first demanded their conversion and when they refused besieged them. They were abandoned by the others and had to surrender after fifteen days. Their massacre was ordered but Abdallah Ibn Obay, a friend, made a threatening remonstrance, so they were only expelled from Madina and their property was confiscated.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁴Gibbon, 3: 104.

³⁵⁵Green, 145.

³⁵⁶Osborn, 62.

There is also a problem with the account of relations with another Jewish tribe. The Muslims say that, after the Nadirites broke the treaty by planning the Prophet's assassination, they were given ten days warning to depart, but that they chose to ignore it and instead fortified themselves in their homes. They were immediately surrounded and had eventually to capitulate. They were allowed to take everything they could on camels, and their caravan was marvelled at. The departing Nadirites proudly displayed their opulence to the accompaniment of timbrels and fifes.

According to Gibbon, the Nadirites, were, "more guilty" as they had conspired to kill the Prophet, and were besieged by him but their resolute defence obtained an honourable capitulation and they departed with "honours of war".³⁵⁷ Osborn continues with his narrative of the Nadirites having been blockaded for planning Muhammad's assassination, on a suspicion that was founded on one of the Prophet's revelations and "suffered the same fate as the Qaynuqa".³⁵⁸

The greatest criticism of western writers is reserved for their account of the treatment of the Qurayzah, which indeed does seem to afford the most material for criticism, since this tribe, unlike the others, had to undergo selective executions and enslavement. The Muslims have generally accepted this as an unfortunate incident which became unavoidable as the sentence against the Qurayzah was passed by a man of the victim's choice. The detailed version of the episode with the Qurayzah is that the pagans of Mecca and the exiled Jews had combined forces to attack Muhammad at Madina. The Muslims prepared to meet them outside the

³⁵⁷Gibbon, 3: 104.

city and employed a Persian stratagem; hitherto unknown to the Arabs, of defending themselves from behind a deep and wide trench. The Muslims were thinly spread around the ditch, which had to be manned at all costs. They were outnumbered and the situation was very tense. To this was added the fear of an attack from the rear, as the Qurayzah, the Jewish tribe in Madina, which still had a defence pact with Muhammad, had secretly conspired against him with his enemies. Facing impossible odds and with destruction seeming imminent, the Muslims were miraculously able to overcome the siege. Immediately this was achieved, Muhammad laid siege against the disloyal Qurayzah, who surrendered after twenty-five days. A deputation of their former allies, the Aus clan of Madina, interceded on their behalf and the Prophet asked their leader to give judgement on them. He pronounced that the men were to be beheaded, their property confiscated and the women and children made captives. The Qur'an records this punishment in ambiguous terms:

(26) and He brought down from their strongholds
those of the followers of earlier revelation who had
aided the aggressors, and cast terror into their hearts:
some you slew, and some you made captive;(33: 26)

The other details of the situation provided much later in Arabic historical writing were similar to those found in the Qur'an.

This incident proved to be a highly controversial one among non-Muslim historians, and the image of Muhammad and the Muslims has been much affected. The story elicited a mixed response amongst western historians because it was so totally out of character for the Prophet. His

³⁵⁸Osborn, 64.

usual practice is clear from Ockley's description of Muhammad's instructions to his troops before the expedition of M'uta, instructions which were repeated by Abu Bakr when, as Caliph, he sent his armies to battle. Muhammad asked them to fear God and to be considerate to the Muslims with them. They were to fight in the name of God and slay those in conflict only. They were forbidden to kill children, woman or infirm and old men as well as priests who had withdrawn to seclusion. In addition they were not to break promises, nor pilfer the spoils, and never to lay hands on a date palm, nor chop down a tree, nor yet pull down any building.³⁵⁹ This largesse was later emulated by the tempestuous Khalid's conquering Muslim army at Bosra. He quoted the Prophet as having given similar instructions and having ordered the immediate cessation of killing once the people had surrendered.³⁶⁰ Gibbon chooses to gloss briefly over the confrontation with the Qurayzah, referring to it as follows: "The Jews had excited and joined the war of the pagans. As soon as it was over Muhammad laid siege to the Qurayzah, who surrendered after twenty-five days. "A venerable leader, to whose judgement they appealed, pronounced the sentence of their death".³⁶¹ But Osborn writes that the barricaded Qurayzah offered to emigrate like the other tribes and pleaded for their lives. Before surrendering they thought of martyring themselves and asked advice from Abu Lubaba, their kinsman in the Muslim camp who signalled their doom. The men were condemned to

³⁵⁹Abul Hasan Nadwi, Muhammad Rasulallah (Lucknow:Islamic Research Academy, 1979) 363.

³⁶⁰Ockley, 1:42.

³⁶¹Gibbon, 3:105.

death and the women and children to slavery. Their protectors, the Aus, pleaded for mitigation but Muhammad insisted that the sentence was Divine and sold 200 of his share of the women and children but kept one in his harem.³⁶² Wollaston, in Half Hours with Mohammed, continues the story of the woman called Rehana who refused to abjure her faith and become the wife of the savage victor who had ordered the "human butchery" of the Bani Qurayzah. He concludes with the statement that "the licentious conqueror was himself conquered".³⁶³ Taylor in his History refers to the same incident³⁶⁴ as does Stobart who made the addition that the Qur'an applauded this slaughter and that Rehana became Muhammad's slave and concubine.³⁶⁵ Disraeli was to express a different opinion in Tancred when Amalek explains to Sheikh Hassan that the Qurayzah came to Madina and were the first to join "him of Mecca", then made war on him "...he broke their bows and led them into captivity; and they are to be found in the cities of Yemen to this day".³⁶⁶ Coningsby, Sybil and Tancred 1847 were part of a trilogy of political novels, which insisted upon Disraeli's favourite religious proposition, that Christianity was the completion of Judaism. Much of his writing seems to reconcile Judaism and Christianity, in order to establish a role for a reforming faith and a revitalised church in a reforming society.

³⁶²Osborn, 65.

³⁶³Arthur N Wollaston, Half Hours With Muhammad (London: Allen, 1886) 58.

³⁶⁴W.C. Taylor, The History of Mohammedanism and its Sects; Derived Chiefly from Oriental Sources (London: John W. Parker, 1839) 102.

³⁶⁵J.W. H. Stobart, Islam & its Founder (London: Society For Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1895) 165-6.

³⁶⁶Disraeli, Tancred 277.

Writing about the same incident with the Qurayzah, Irving was to comment that this conduct of Muhammad's towards them was exceptional as he was generally forgiving and humane.³⁶⁷ This viewpoint can be given further credence by the fact that historians on both sides agree with Osborn's record of a triumphant entry into Mecca by the Prophet heading a victorious army dressed in full military array of 10,000 on which occasion six men and four women were excluded from a general clemency.³⁶⁸

Recently Walid Arafat has differed with this view and pointed out that the veracity of Ibn Ishaq's record of this story was challenged by his contemporary, Malik the jurist. Arafat also questions the reliability of Ishaq, who collected his material more than a hundred years after the event, from prejudiced sources. He says that, were Ishaq's view valid, then surely the Qur'an, the only contemporary account of the time, would have given it prominence and it would have been observed as a major example by posterity. Since neither of the two has occurred and since Islam specifically enjoins that only those responsible for sedition should be punished, and as there is no historical evidence of organised Islamic mass killings, the allegation should be rejected. The proclivities of later Muslim dynasties were manifestations of their caprices and had little to do with religious injunctions.

It would be pertinent to note that Muir, in his earlier book Mahomet, vigorously upheld Ibn Ishaq's history against attacks on his veracity. He curiously reasoned that Ishaq was not less careful than other traditionalists and that later

³⁶⁷Irving, 1: 212.

authors quote him confidently by ascribing the highest character to him.³⁶⁹ Ishaq's biography was written under official patronage over a century after the death of the Prophet. Only portions of this work are extant, in subsequent biographies. Unar Waqidy the historian, is one exception, a writer who has not used this biography in his own work.³⁷⁰

After the engagements with the Jewish tribes, Muhammad entered into a peace treaty with the pagans of Mecca which was ratified at Huddabiyyah, much against his people's wishes. This treaty produced ten years of peace with the Meccans during which period the Muslims were able to consolidate their position. Their faith was spreading at a rapid pace and the Prophet wrote letters to all the neighbouring rulers inviting them to accept Islam. During this period the Jewish stronghold at Khaybar, which was constantly inciting the tribes around it to take up arms against the Muslims, not least because many of the Nadirites had settled there as well, was laid siege. The Bani Khaybar eventually capitulated and made a truce according to which they were allowed to live in their homes and cultivate the land in exchange for giving one half of their produce to the Muslims. They were followed by other opposing Jewish tribes who were also allowed to retain their properties in return for half of the produce. The Prophet also took military action against the other Arab tribes who were giving trouble. As a result of these expeditions the Muslim community improved its financial condition considerably. They also had to meet a Byzantine challenge on their frontiers with a force of three

³⁶⁸Osborn, 67.

³⁶⁹Muir, introduction lxviii.

³⁷⁰Muir, introduction lxix.

thousand Muslims against a hundred thousand Romans. Eventually the Meccans who broke the peace treaty also had to face conquest by the Muslims in an occupation that is renowned for its magnanimity and peacefulness. After instituting administrative arrangements for the city of his birth, the Prophet returned to Madina. Here the Muslims still had to face insurgencies from other tribes at Hunayn and Taif as well as a Byzantine onslaught at Tabuk. By this time the Prophet was receiving many deputations and the Qur'an injunction imposing *zakat* or the poor due was also received. With the rudiments for a Muslim state established the Prophet decided to go to Mecca to show the Muslims how to perform the ritual pilgrimage. This proved to be his last *hajj* and his address is known as the Last Sermon. Muhammad was to die shortly after his return to Madina.

MIRAJ

Keeping in view the complicated development of *hadith* and historical writing, combined with the prejudices of western writers, confusion was bound to prevail in recording the events in and regarding the Prophet's life.

Muir displays this by first saying that there were very few traditions recorded from the Companions of Muhammad as they were wary of ascribing false details for which they feared punishment in hell.³⁷¹ Muir then says that there was a likelihood of the greatest exaggerations occurring in accounts of the various tales of private endeavour in the service of the Prophet. These tales were difficult to

disprove during the early spread of Islam "when the public mind was in the highest degree impressionable and credulous". As a result they eventually found a place in the unquestioning record of the second century.³⁷² This sounds paradoxical, considering the fearless criticism of Muhammad by his contemporaries and the progressive increase in reverence and credulity, which crept in later despite the efforts at intellectual honesty by diligent recorders. The Muslim attitude towards these records is one of cultivating a suspension of disbelief and, unless they are in direct conflict with the omnipotence of God, they are tolerated at the least and perhaps incorporated into belief.

The Prophet's nocturnal journey to the heavens provides an excellent example for study. The Muslims accept this journey as it is recorded in the Qur'an

LIMITLESS in His glory is He who transported
His servant by night from the Inviolable House
of Worship [at Mecca] to the Remote House of
Worship [at Jerusalem] - the environs of which
We had blessed - so that We might show him some of
Our symbols: for verily, He is all-hearing, all-seeing.
(17:1)

This incident is also briefly mentioned in a few *hadith* or traditions which give various accounts of the details. A conflict of opinion occurs about whether this was a physical or spiritual ascension. However, notwithstanding this event and other similar occurrences, Muhammad always denied possessing the power to perform miracles like the other prophets who preceded him. However legends that grew about the details of this visit included Buraq which means lightening and which in Muslim mythology is a horse. There is no concrete evidence regarding this horse, but the legend has established such a wide circulation that it has

³⁷¹Muir, introduction lviii.

³⁷²Muir, introduction l.

acquired authenticity. It is supposed to be the creature which transported the Prophet on his nocturnal visit from Mecca to Jerusalem, where from the Dome of the Rock he ascended to heaven, and conversed with the previous prophets and with God. The event of the journey is recorded in the Qur'an but there are various schools of thought regarding it. Some consider it to have been a spiritual journey, others explain that it was in a dream, while there are many who accept it to have taken place physically. Then there are the traditions which describe Buraq as an animal white in colour, smaller than a mule but bigger than an ass and with a step that was as long as its eye-sight reached.³⁷³

These variations provided Muir with material to discuss the fabricated details surrounding Muhammad's slightest word. He ascribes these to "the growth of successive ages," and cites the example of the Prophet's heavenly journey which has only a brief mention in the Qur'an. He says that the minutiae brought down in tradition were probably the result of the heated imagination of the early Muslims. Muir disagrees with Sprenger's allegation that these resulted from the Prophet's narrative.³⁷⁴ These details were also included in Taylor's History.

Scott was also to include this story in his novel the Talisman when he describes the knight Kenneth being overwhelmed by the rapidity of Hakim's Arab steed. Hakim then informs him that it belongs to a breed called the Winged, which are only less wonderful than Buraq in speed.³⁷⁵ Kenneth also appreciates the vigorousness of this breed when compared to the ponderous and armoured rides of

³⁷³Fazlul Karim, Al-Hadis an English Translation and Commentary of Mishkat-ul- Masabih (Lahore: The Book House, n.d.) 381.

³⁷⁴Muir, introduction liv.

the crusaders.³⁷⁶ This vigour contributed to the success of the Muslim armies during the crusades.

It is a recorded fact that Arab horses were indeed famous for being light-footed and that this contributed greatly to the success of the Arab cavalry, a fact which can be attributed to greater attention paid by the Arabs to the breeding of their horses. However these truths do not account for the way in which Allardyce describes the shrine of Murtaza Ali, with a small enclosure in which: “the eye of faith might discern the hoof-prints of the sacred beast, Alborak, upon the exact spot where he had once stood at the door of Murtaza Ali's”. Allardyce elaborates that “Muhammadan divines were not sure if saying seven ‘Fattahs’ at the tomb or kissing these footprints was a more efficacious act of devotion”.³⁷⁷ It was fables like this that led to the proliferation of other miraculous stories and consequently resulted in rampant confusion regarding the entity of Islam amongst people of all beliefs.

MIRACLES

Gibbon described a collection of miracles reportedly performed by Muhammad,³⁷⁸ some of them completely alien to accepted Islamic belief, especially since the Prophet repeatedly declared that the Qur'an was his only miracle, and, in reply to the unbeliever's demand for the manifestation of some miracles as proof of Prophecy, the Qur'an says:

³⁷⁵Scott, Talisman 292.

³⁷⁶Scott, Talisman 293.

³⁷⁷Allardyce, Sunshine 3: 63.

³⁷⁸Gibbon, 3 : 23.

And if they give thee the lie - even so, before thy time, have [other] apostles been given the lie when they came with all evidence of the truth, and with books of divine wisdom, and with light-giving revelation. (3:184)

Sceptical writers had a confusion of opinions regarding miracles, and so said that Muhammad himself had blamed the disbelieving Meccans for withholding miracles from him but, since he had to be practical, claimed the Qur'an itself.³⁷⁹ A reputed scholar like Goldziher was to say that Muhammad deprecated his own gift because it was "an easy way to avoid the danger of risking his prestige by unsuccessful attempts at miracles".³⁸⁰ Shaw was to give a more balanced view in Back To Methuselah: A Touchstone For Dogma with this assessment: "Humans love legends and miracles, comparing Muhammad and Jesus Shaw says that both were badgered by people for a display and while Muhammad expressly forbade them Jesus lost his temper when asked to give them an exhibition as a conjuror".³⁸¹

DEIFICATION

The slow progression of the distorted image, combined with the behaviour of uninformed Muslims who published collections of other prophetic miracles, continued to inflame western imagination which depicted the man who preached that there is no God but God himself as being set up to be a deity. It is this confusion regarding Muhammad's status that leads to such fantastic contrivances

³⁷⁹Osborn, 17-20.

³⁸⁰Goldziher, Studies 19.

³⁸¹Shaw, Prefaces 540.

as that when he is seen as a Pagan god who has to be pacified, in William Beckford's Vathek.

Rudyard Kipling illustrates this confusion even more clearly in "The Mother Lodge" by having the Muslim Prophet Muhammad complete an incongruous triumvirate with the Christian God and the Hindu God Shiva, in the mind of a British private soldier: "with Mo'mmed, God, an' Shiva Changing' pickets in our' ead".³⁸²

These representations are anathema to Islam, as Muhammad himself insisted upon the fact that he was merely a humble servant of God, with no pretensions to any god-like characteristics. This was also clearly expressed in the Qur'an:

(79) It is not conceivable that a human being unto whom God had granted revelation, and sound judgement, and prophethood, should thereafter have said unto people "Worship *me* beside God"; but rather [did he exhort them], "Become men of God by spreading the knowledge of the Divine writ, and by your own deep study[thereof]." (80) And neither did he bid you to take the angels and the prophets for your lords: [for] would he bid you to deny the truth after you have surrendered yourselves unto God? (3:79-80)

Unfortunately Muslims themselves also transgress the bounds stipulated by the Qur'an and the vicious cycle of misinterpretations continues unabated.

This persistent confusion is also responsible for the use of the Prophet's name in oaths and ejaculatory terms placed in the mouths of fictional characters as a device bestowing authenticity. Unfortunately it is a practice which is wholly unfamiliar to Islam, for it only magnifies the name of God and forbids the ascribing

of any partners to him. Even in general use the informed Muslims use the name of Allah to express their feelings, and expressly avoid invocations of any other being or thing. However there are some Muslims who do swear using the Prophet's name even though this is considered unIslamic. Western writers may have been misled by such confusing Muslim behaviour. The aforementioned practice, or a desire for sensationalism, seemed to set the scene for the various authors who are quoted here. They are at least right in stressing the gravity in the use of such words. Whatever the purpose of the writer, it again demands an explanation here that these oaths were contrary to Islamic strictures which discourage their use and stress the seriousness of using such expressions, by specifying that oaths must be taken only on Allah's name or on the Qur'an and that this should not be done frivolously. Broken oaths had to be expiated by acts of charity.

When Ockley has the despairing Muslims before the fall of Aleppo cry "Ya Mahommed! and O Mahomet!" he could not be depicting genuine Muslim cries.³⁸³ He must have been aware of his mistake for, though he made use of the term "by Mahomet", he added a detailed explanatory note, intimating that this was a diminutive of the translation of the Arabic term: "Wahakkidini Refoul Allah By the Veracity or Truth of the religion of the Apostle of God. Sometimes, Wahkki Refoul Allah. As it may be in this Place".³⁸⁴

This painstaking note made the words more harmonious with Muslim tradition. Unfortunately successive writers chose to ignore it and imbibed only

³⁸²Kipling, Early Verse 445.

³⁸³Ockley, 1: 270.

³⁸⁴Ockley, 1: 183.

what was embodied in the text. Morier, in Oriental Tale, mistranslates the term Bismillah, which means in the name of Allah, as: "Bismillah, in the name of the prophet, let us kill."³⁸⁵ In Mirza he calls a Mollah "a servant of the blessed Prophet" and uses the term "... by the beard of the Prophet".³⁸⁶ In Hajji Baba he says: "I swear by the beard of the Prophet, that if you do not behave well, I'll burn your father." ³⁸⁷ D. Morier in Photo was to echo and add to this: "Praised be the Prophet!" and to write of "... a decision which, please the blessed Prophets and the Imams".³⁸⁸ Lytton, in "Leila", uses the term: "By the tomb of the Prophet!"³⁸⁹ In Don Juan, an epic satire about a young Spaniard's travails in which he is sentenced to death, Byron describes pleadings for clemency by Baba, the reluctant executioner, to a jealous Sultana Gulbeyaz in the following unlikely manner: "And begg'd by every hair of Mahomet's beard, /She would revoke the order he had heard".³⁹⁰

In the Talisman there are several such oaths. Scott's Saracen responds to the Crusader: "by Muhammad, Prophet of God, and by Allah, God of the Prophet", and adds "but I swear to thee, by the turban of the Prophet". The Saracen Amir uses a similar expression: "By the head of Muhammad, and by the honour of a soldier" and Saladin sends a scroll which begins with "The blessings of Allah and his Prophet Muhammad".³⁹¹

³⁸⁵Morier, An Oriental Tale (Printed Not Published Brighton: Leppard, 1839) 3.

³⁸⁶Morier, Mirza 3 vols. (London: Bentley, 1841) 1: 25

³⁸⁷Morier, Hajji Baba 24.

³⁸⁸D.Morier, Photo the Suliote a Tale of Modern Greece 3 vols.(London: Booth, 1857) 3: 9.

³⁸⁹Lytton, Leila 33.

³⁹⁰Byron, 676.

³⁹¹Scott, Talisman 9,23,306,105.

Major Gagahan is an amusing tale of a swashbuckling English officer in India. This early burlesque makes satirical fun of general idiosyncrasies with good humour. It takes the form of a boastful autobiography by Major O'Grady Gagahan, described on his visiting card as Commander of a battalion of "Irregular Horse", Ahmednuggar and was serialised in the New Monthly Magazine February 1838-February 1839. Thackeray has four comic targets: Irish Braggadocio; the tall stories of the Indian service; the current vogue for adventurous oriental stories; and heroism. He makes Gagahan undergo various adventures and deprivations till he eventually marries the general's daughter. Initially Gagahan has an unsuccessful romance and travels widely, he even participates in court intrigues at the time of the Marhatta war. Verve and veracity are combined with great enjoyment and the intrepid hero is said to destroy 134 "elephants with a single cannon-ball". Thackeray revels in mixing nonsensical oaths with abandon and in Gagahan he uses such expressions as:

"In the name of the Prophet, I spit on thee..." ³⁹²

Thackeray employs the same device of attributing omniscience to the Prophet in his poem about a storm at sea in "The White Squall" :

....The mothers clutched their children,
The men sung, "Allah! Illah!
Mashallah Bismillah!"
As the warring waters doused them,
And splashed them and soused them;
And they called upon the Prophet,
And thought but little of it .³⁹³

³⁹²Thackeray, Gagahan 215, 276.

³⁹³Thackeray, Cornhill 154.

However Muslims may have contributed to these misconceptions regarding the Prophet's status themselves, they would generally not use such expressions as Kipling employs. He is seriously misinformed in his use of exclamatory terms to represent Muslim behaviour. In "The Ballad Of Ahmed Shah", for example, Kipling has a similar oath:

Softly he mused O'er a trichi thick:-

'By the Beard of the Prophet I've got the trick!'³⁹⁴

Allen makes the same mistake in his novel Tents of Shem when he writes: "by the beard of the Prophet, I solemnly tell you", and "We will kill and destroy in honour of Allah and of Muhammad His Prophet!"³⁹⁵ Taylor in Tippoo also uses an incongruous term, which would rarely enter a Muslim head, when he makes a threatened Muslim remark: "By the soul of Muhammad, the cloud beyond us threatens much".³⁹⁶

These apparently innocuous exhortations tend to reinforce the mistaken attribute of omniscience applied to Muhammad by the ill-informed. Consequently writers put words into character's mouths that should be completely alien to 'the native' and give a contrived effect.

Similar behaviour amongst Muslims is described at times as manifestation of popular Islam. It would be more pertinent to describe it as a degeneration of Muslim behaviour, for Islam, being constant, never changes, it is the manifestations of it by disparate Muslims that do so. It does not take long for other innovations to creep in and prime examples of such mistakes are discussed below.

³⁹⁴Kipling, Early verse 354.

³⁹⁵Allen, 2 : 24, 38.

³⁹⁶Taylor, Tippoo 1: 9.

GREEN COLOUR

Another reference, frequently used by writers of both persuasions, has been the statement that the colour green is particularly Islamic, or associated with the Prophet. While it is true that green has been generally accepted as the colour representing Muslims, there is no Islamic basis for it. Apart from being alluded to indirectly in the Qur'an it is never mentioned in the *hadith* which in fact record the use of colours other than green by the Prophet. Apart from these there are no valid accounts of this choice. However it has achieved such commonplace acceptance amongst the Muslims that it will be difficult to remove it and, being inconsequential, may be allowed to prevail.

Simon Ockley introduced a different concept of the belief in his account of the battle of Yermouk in Syria: Abu Ubaidah stood at the rear of the army under the yellow banner which Abu Bakr had given him and which was the same under which the Prophet had fought the battle of "Chaibar".³⁹⁷ Further accounts are extant of different colours being used for demarcation of various religious groups. During the reign al Mutawakkil, the Abbasid Caliph (847-861), Jews and Christians were ordered to wear a distinctive dress, could only ride on mules or donkeys and were not allowed to build new synagogues or churches.³⁹⁸ This indulgence was particular to certain Muslim dynasties and was certainly not Islamic. Morier further embellishes the curious practise: "Her dress was Turkish, the house she entered was a Turk's - that was evident by the painting of it". He

³⁹⁷Ockley, 1: 235.

³⁹⁸Masud ul Hasan, 1: 232.

notes "There are certain colours which a Turk is allowed to use in painting and decorating his house, which are forbidden to Jews and Christians".³⁹⁹

From these quotations it is clear that this preoccupation with colour has no Islamic basis and is a matter of Muslim preference, whenever it is manifested. In Muslim history the Alid dynasty was to distinguish itself by wearing the colour green in contrast to the black of the Abbasids. In the face of rebellion Al-Mamun, the Abbasid Caliph (813-833), married his daughter to Ali Reza of the Alids and adopted the green colour in order to placate them.⁴⁰⁰ A protest has also been recorded in connection with Al-Mamun's adoption of the colour green where it was said that white was the colour of the Alids and green the colour of the Persian Emperor and the Zoroastrians.⁴⁰¹ The colour has been accepted by many as particularly associated with the Prophet in spite of the lack of evidence in both the Qur'an and the *hadith*. The only obvious evidence of a connection may be the colour of the dome of the Prophet's Mosque at Madina. According to Ali Hafiz in his book about the history of Madina, translated from the Arabic, the dome was painted green for the first time by Sultan Abdul Hamid in 1837 who directed that the green colour be applied to it. Ever since then the process has been followed whenever the need arises and the Prophet's mosque then acquired the name the Green Dome. Previously it was known as *Al-Baida*, *Al-Faiha* and *Al-Zarqa*.⁴⁰² Like most of the other incorporations into the story of the Prophet this is obviously

³⁹⁹Morier, *Ayesha* 31.

⁴⁰⁰Masud ul Hasan, 1: 220.

⁴⁰¹A.I. al Sawi al-Jahshiyari, *Kitab al-wuzara* (Baghdad: 1938) 256.

⁴⁰²Ali Hafiz, *Chapters from the History of Madina* (Jeddah: Al Madina, n.d.) 79.

of later times with no obvious origin, but, unlike the other discrepancies, it does not contradict any Islamic strictures and can so be harmlessly indulged.

This misconception appears in different modes as can be observed from the following examples. Morier was to employ it to further distinguish between different groups: "The Turcomans, as well as the Turks, their descendants, are of the Suni persuasion: with them green is a sacred colour; but it is not so among the Shias".⁴⁰³ Pardoe elucidated: "But a man in a green turban, to mark his being a descendant of Mahomet, and who seemed the master of the feast, had his eye on me".⁴⁰⁴ Samuel Green defines emirs as lineal Aus (a major Madinan tribe) descendants of the Prophet, distinguished by the wearing of deep sea-green turbans. This colour was peculiar to all the race of "Mahomet" who have special immunities on the score of their descent. Green elaborates that "one of them carries the green standard of the Prophet when the Grand Seignior appears in any public solemnity".⁴⁰⁵ Kinglake in Eothen describes the incident of Ali, the young cousin of Muhammad's, who acted as a decoy, and foiled an assassination attempt, while the Prophet escaped to Madina: "who wrapped himself in the green mantle of the Prophet", at the time of Hejira in order to deceive the enemies of the Prophet.⁴⁰⁶ Sherer uses Mustapha, another name for the Prophet Muhammad, when he describes the Muslim Princess refusing the missionary girl's exhortations to convert to Christianity by saying that: she descended from men who had "fought for Mustapha (on thee be benedictions!) I must not in these dark moments, and

⁴⁰³Morier, Hajji Baba 13.

⁴⁰⁴Pardoe, Bosphorus 140.

⁴⁰⁵Green, preface 10.

when death, you tell me, may be near at hand, desert the green flag".⁴⁰⁷ Allardyce in City Of Sunshine, which is set in a village in Bengal, offers a sympathetic account of Hindu society and the problems of child marriage, caste and money. His book is concerned with the interaction between Hindu and Muslims in the village and is replete with stereotypes. This surfaces in different modes as Allardyce describes the young Mussulman wearing a turban of green silk " - the favourite colour of the Prophet".⁴⁰⁸ Margoliouth also comments that "the green turban, which is the external badge of this nobility, dates from an ordinance of the Egyptian Sultan in 1371. i.e. the Prophet's descendants".⁴⁰⁹ This misconception and most of the other preconceived notions with their rebuttals are vividly manifested in John Buchan's Greenmantle. The political background of the novel, representing the perceived menace of Islam, is similar to that discussed in this thesis. Against this setting a story of high espionage unfolds which involves the search for an alleged "prophet" who is given the obvious codename of Greenmantle. This prophet is supposed to head an uprising of Muslims, which is finally managed, but with a British agent replacing the dead messiah. It is almost as if the novel encapsulates western political expediency regarding the portrayal of Islam and Muslims, then as well as now, in an ingenuous manner.

⁴⁰⁶Charles Kinglake, Eothen new ed. (London: Harrison, 1864)112.

⁴⁰⁷Sherer, 321.

⁴⁰⁸Allardyce, Sunshine 4: 46.

⁴⁰⁹Margoliouth, 82.

CONCLUSION

As was concluded in the chapter on the Qur'an there were also many stereotypical criticisms of the personality of the Prophet. The Muslim world has generally been amenable to works which gave a comparatively balanced account, as in Carlyle's lectures. Sweetman states that Carlyle dwelt deeply on the sincerity of the Prophet,⁴¹⁰ which left his audience in London confused but was greatly appreciated by Muslims, even though Carlyle was dismissive of the Qur'an. This was demonstrated by the behaviour of the Turkish ambassador in London who did not protest against Carlyle's lectures, against English translations of the Qur'an, the prefaces of which class Muhammad as an imposter, or even against earlier books which name him as Mahound the devil himself.⁴¹¹ In fact Carlyle was as highly esteemed by the Turks as by other Muslims. A Persian nobleman would ask E.G.Browne to read from Carlyle's Heroes and Hero Worship, which was highly valued by educated Muslims because of its favourable opinion of Muhammad.⁴¹² At the same time the courage of Carlyle in so boldly deviating from the norms of his society in favour of truth must still be appreciated. The disapprobation he must have undergone would have been considerable. Some non-Muslim critics find Carlyle's liberal views distasteful and insist that he eventually recanted, though there is little evidence of this. The situation was so desperate that the Muslims were prepared to reach out and accept any sign of a reasonable attitude, no matter how it might be presented. The study of the depiction of the personality of

⁴¹⁰Sweetman, introduction 8.

⁴¹¹ Shaw Prefaces 418.

Muhammad the Prophet of Islam in nineteenth century literature underlines the fact that there has been a persistent diversification in the way Muhammad has been viewed by Muslims and non-Muslims. This has resulted in the continuation of the uninformed image of the Prophet's personality, and consequently of Islam the religion he propagated. This anomaly generates a vicious cycle of fallacies which leads to the perpetration of clouded judgements and gross misinterpretation of Muslim behaviour on both sides.

⁴¹²Edward G. Browne. A Year Amongst the Persians (London: Century, 1984) 92.

CHAPTER VII - GENERAL MISCONCEPTIONS

The misunderstanding of Islamic concepts in the period up to the end of the nineteenth century was more extensive and more varied than that outlined in those chapters of this thesis which relate to the Qur'an and to the personality of the Prophet Muhammad. With the predisposition for criticism of the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad firmly established, it was not very difficult to transfer bias to the practitioners of the religion. This area provided even more material to generate further misconception, because, not only was the populace spread over a large disparate area, but it was greatly varied in its religious practice as well. The study of these distortions leads to the conclusion that there had always been a tendency to exaggerate supposed Islamic practises by outside observers of the religion. Eventually these misconceptions came to acquire a life of their own, to the extent that they were accepted as representative of Islamic belief, even by some inadequately informed Muslims. This chapter will concentrate on some of the misconceptions that have appeared more frequently than others in western literature. The selection of these misconceptions has been made on the same basis used in previous chapters. The guideline for their inclusion was that they were frequently used by western writers to depict Muslim behaviour and were pertinent to the core of Islam.

SWORD AND QUR'AN

The overwhelmingly sanguinary descriptions of the spread of Islam which were familiar in the nineteenth century, despite evidence to the contrary, led to the inevitable and paramount misconception that Islam is or has been a religion propagated by the sword from the time of its declaration in the seventh century onwards.

There is little evidence to support the perpetual assertion that Islam was spread by the sword. Under scrutiny this allegation has proved as difficult to verify as it is to ride into battle with a sword in one hand and the Qur'an in the other. Keeping the mortal fallibility of Muslim rulers in mind, and putting individual temperament on one side, it was the guidance of the Islamic injunctions which helped them to choose the more humane option. In spite of these provisions, however, Muslim rulers, being subject both to human and inhuman proclivities, did enact horrors on others as well as each other and frequently turned a blind eye to any Islamic injunctions which were inimical to their ambitions. Their policies were guided less by the principles of Islam and more by their political and tribal affiliations. This is illustrated in Muslim accounts of the Seljuq conquests in Asia Minor which were made in the name of the Seljuqs and not in the name of the Caliph Al-Qaim, a devout eleventh century Muslim.⁴¹³ However for the western writer the conflict would inevitably acquire the qualification of being an Islamic conquest. This is a point where the differentiation between Muslim and Islamic becomes helpful if a clearer picture is to emerge.

The Qur'anic *ayahs* stipulating tolerance in matters of faith which form the Islamic basis are vital to this issue and need to be studied in detail. The same *ayahs* have been frequently cited by writers on both sides of the divide, to either enhance the idea, as in the case of Muslims, or, when employed by western writers, to detract from the idea of tolerance in Islam. Unfortunately the misconception about forced conversion in Islam, which was deliberately cultivated by non-Muslims, was to prevail and create confusion amongst the Muslims as well. To the detriment of Muslim society the confusion prevented the more accurate Islamic idea of tolerance in matters of faith from being perpetuated. To promote understanding of the misconception which promotes violence it becomes imperative to put the idea of tolerance in Islam in perspective.

ISLAMIC TOLERANCE

Tolerance of religions was unequivocally stated very early in the history of Islam as "THERE SHALL BE no coercion in matters of faith." (2:256). The doctrine was to provide the foundation for all Islamic activity and was one of the main reasons for the proliferation of the religion. It was manifested when the Prophet and the early Muslim converts together with their clans, the Bani Hashim and Bani Muttalib, were ostracised by the pagans. They were made to live in a valley outside Mecca for many years during which time they sometimes faced famine as a result of social and economic sanctions. This ostracism was resorted to by the Pagans because they wanted to contain Muhammad's ideas and prevent

⁴¹³Masud ul Hasan, 2: 284.

them from spreading amongst the merchants and pilgrims who came to Mecca. Daily confrontation with the misery of a community so close to them caused a build-up of remorse amongst the perpetrators of the injustice. Eventually the Pagans revoked the interdiction on the Muslims and offered a compromise to the Prophet, that all the Meccans should practise both religions. It is then that the following *ayahs* was revealed:⁴¹⁴

Say: "O you who deny the truth! "I do not worship that which you worship, and neither do you worship that which I worship. "And I will not worship that which you have [ever] worshipped, and neither will you [ever] worship that which I worship. "Unto you, your moral law, and unto me, mine!" (109: 1-6)

It is on the basis of these *ayahs* and the numerous *hadith* illustrating the same tolerance, that Islamic jurists unanimously condemn forced conversion under all circumstances and declare it to be null and void. Any coercion is regarded as a grievous sin in Islam, something which contradicts the fallacy that Islam commands conversion by the sword. This belief has been borne out by Muslim behaviour in general. However there have always been exceptions, Muslims who certainly did not adhere to religious strictures, perhaps as a result of personal vagaries. Historically it has been observed that, even during the military conquests of the Byzantine and Persian Empires and those of other nations by the Muslims in the early years, the spread of Islam came about indirectly. In fact during that period fiscal expediency caused the Muslims to discourage conversions amongst their subjects. This was specifically recorded in connection with the large scale conversions in Transoxania during the early eighth century. Promises had been

⁴¹⁴Martin Lings, Muhammad his life based on the Earliest Sources (London: Allen, 1986) 91.

made to the populace that on conversion to Islam they would be exempted from paying the *jizya*. Consequently the Muslim administration found it difficult to remit this poll tax and a discrimination was made between old and new converts to Islam, which led to great resentment amongst the people and erupted in a revolt. The Khaqan of the Turks came to the aid of the rebels and the Abbasids lost Samarkand and Bokhara. They had eventually to agree to the demand of the converts and only later were they able to restore their rule.⁴¹⁵ As a practical method the Muslims tried to maintain a distance from the occupied populace in order to preserve their identity. It is pertinent to note that Islam has never had a missionary movement comparable to that of the Christians. The movements for propagating Islam are also more concerned with the revival of faith within the Muslim community rather than with seeking converts. This is not to say that they refused those who voluntarily sought conversion. If some organisations used this cover for other agendas, that is again a result of their own proclivities rather than of Islamic dogma. Forced conversions are invalid for practising Muslims, and are certainly not meritorious. The conundrum is confusing and non-Muslims have always found it difficult to reconcile the opposing factors of military conquests and religious passivity.

The reality of Islam is very different from the image that has emerged from the confusion of those western writers who have taken up the subject. Morier had provided an earlier basis for this misconception in his Second Journey To Persia when he explained that "Every good mussulman is enjoined to make as many

⁴¹⁵Masud ul Hasan, 2: 182.

converts as possible".⁴¹⁶ This is an aim which Muslims are allowed to achieve as long as it is not accompanied by force. Morier was to develop this erroneous concept even more graphically in The Oriental Tale. This is a short story about an Englishman who is taken prisoner by a Tartar tribe, and is compelled to administer care to an ailing tribal girl. The two fall in love, to the great anger of the chief and the tribe, and eventually manage to escape.⁴¹⁷ The interrogation of the Englishman is reminiscent of the religious debate in Morier's novel Ayesha. Osmond in Ayesha, refuses to believe in the Prophet or the Qur'an and, according to Morier, is liable to be killed by the assembly. Sulaiman, a "sound Muhammadan" tries to resolve the predicament facing Osmond when he says there is no doubt that "All infidels are worthy of death", no more time should be wasted discussing that issue. Then Sulaiman distracts the crowd's attention from Osmond by reciting *ayahs* from the Qur'an. Osmond extricates himself from the predicament of forcibly becoming a Muslim by demanding a debate between the two religions of Christianity and Islam. He stipulates that he will convert to the religion which is victorious in the debate. However, when he fails in his argument for Christianity, he reneges on his promise and, after publicly denouncing Islam, narrowly escapes death. The Mufti in Ayesha also reacts to Osmond's insults by inciting the crowd with: "Mussulmans, do you hear this? Mussulmans, our faith is in danger! the infidel is among us - slay!" and the crowd surges forward to kill.⁴¹⁸ Morier comments that Ayesha, who had been taught Christianity by her mother,

⁴¹⁶Morier, Second Journey 360 .

⁴¹⁷Morier, Mirza 19.

⁴¹⁸Morier, Ayesha 113,126.

could not reconcile herself to the *ayahs* of the Qur'an which made it lawful to kill those who disclaimed her Prophet, stating that this could "never stand before right reason".⁴¹⁹ Even the generally discerning Scott expressed this view in an uncharacteristic passage of The Vision Of Don Roderick:

Alla and Mahomet their battle-word,
The choice they yield, the Koran or the Sword. ⁴²⁰

Similarly, the usually well informed Disraeli was to write in Alroy: "I am a devout Moslem, and 'tis my duty to destroy all Giaours". This remark was made to Alroy by Hassan who had helped Alroy and had now been robbed of a load of shawls.⁴²¹ Lytton developed the concept a little further in Leila as: "The sword of the believer is the Key of Heaven and Hell".⁴²² This obviously refers to the fate of the Muslim's soul which was believed to be rewarded by martyrdom. This erroneous image of Islam prevailed and was transferred into poetry in such works as Tennyson's Akbar's Dream. The subject of this late poem is the Mughal Emperor Akbar's attempt to create a universal religion that would incorporate the best in all the religions of India including Christianity and Zoroastrianism together with Islam and Hinduism. The experiment failed, but it provided Tennyson with material to falsely malign Islam in Akbar's Dream (1881) when he has the Emperor say:

".....; but our Ulama,
Who, "sitting on green sofas contemplate
The torment of the damned".

And continues with:

"To drive
A people from their ancient fold of faith,

⁴¹⁹Morier, Ayesha, 46.

⁴²⁰Scott, 4: 23.

⁴²¹Disraeli, Alroy 92.

⁴²²Bulwer Leila 52.

and wall them up perforce in-mine unwise”.⁴²³

JIHAD

The different methods employed by Muslims and Christians when acquiring converts were often graphically contrasted by Osborn who depicted the mythic Arab, with the Qur'an in one hand and the sword in the other, “spreading his creed amid the glare of burning cities and the shrieks of violated homes”. He contrasted this image with that of the apostles of Christ, working in the dark recesses of the Roman world, amidst the moral darkness but with the gentle but irresistible power of right.⁴²⁴ Osborn is comparatively dispassionate in his observations, but even he turns to the preconceived image when he says that God had commanded Muslims to fight His battles called *jihad* and that they were to kill unbelievers until conversion was achieved.⁴²⁵ Osborn's idea was developed by Grant Allen who introduced the subject of a *jihad* into his novel Shem. The subject of the novel is a religious struggle carried on by the Kabyles in Algeria who instigate the conflict by reciting from the Qur'an on the extermination of infidels.

On the contrary, although battles (amongst other struggles) fought in the name of Islam are also called *jihad* these are supposed to be undertaken only when all other means to resist oppression have been exhausted. The confusion regarding this concept, along with the custom of displaying a stylised wooden sword in mosques during Friday sermons or *khutbas*, could have contributed to the prevalent sanguinary image of the “sword” in Islam. This custom, which was

⁴²³Tennyson, 1444.

⁴²⁴Osborn, 54.

⁴²⁵Osborn, 53.

discontinued in the nineteenth century, symbolised the Prophet's exhortation after a battle, that they were returning from a lesser battle or *al jihad as asghar*, to a greater one *al jihad al akbar*.⁴²⁶ This greater *jihad*, refers to a struggle with the self to prevent it from vice, ignorance and disbelief. In comparison to this moral strife, the physical conflict against injustice has a lesser priority. However, like most western writers, Allen uses it here as a stereotypical expression for violence and says "In a Jihad... 'all infidels alike are commanded to be slain, without fear or favour, without lot or exception'".⁴²⁷ Dod reinforced this misconception pugilistically and with a particularly strange comment: "Islam was said to have been a religion of opposition from the first, living by aggression, mighty and purifying while it flows in full flood, but when resting and at peace, it stagnates and throws up a filthy and putrid scum".⁴²⁸ Neither of these allegations have any historical support, on the contrary the description could even have been the very opposite of the truth as, in the heat of battle, Muslims may at times have succumbed to non-Islamic acts.

This antipathy to Muslims does not belong solely to the west, there are those in the east who have also found Islam a convenient scapegoat for all their misfortunes. The Buddhists blame the Muslims for their decline in India, while ignoring other more plausible factors such as havocs of nature and seventh century Hindu revivalism. This decline was recorded in the Vishnu Parana, compiled to record the triumph of Hinduism over Buddhism. The ancient Buddhist centres of

⁴²⁶Glasse, see "Sword of Islam" 382.

⁴²⁷Allen, 2: 250, 28.

⁴²⁸Dod, 11.

learning and civilisation in India were overrun and decimated long before the first Arab incursions in the subcontinent. Evidently, when the Muslims initially entered Sind they were given support by the remaining Buddhists who were unhappy with the Hindu rulers. This is plausible because Buddhism is so closely related to Hinduism that it posed more of a threat, as it had done in the past, than the totally alien Islam. This argument is supported by the fact that, if Islam were so determined to exterminate other religions, then it would have destroyed both Hinduism and Buddhism rather than have been selective in preferring one to the other. It is a historical fact that India has always remained predominantly Hindu despite nearly a millennium of Muslim rule. The Muslims did perpetrate some forcible conversions on Buddhists but this was in a small part of Bengal and in the eleventh century. A recent publication of a Buddhist Society of London, tells a very different story and states that Buddhism only met with two opposing forces during its history, the Muslims and communism.⁴²⁹ According to D.P.Singhal's account of Indian history the India to which Islam came was in a state of decline, perhaps as a result of a debilitating pride in past accomplishments. The Arabs treated Indian culture with the utmost consideration, but the Indians remained unresponsive. In his brash youth Muhammad b. Qasim, the first Muslim infiltrator, did inflict some harshness but he made up for it by allowing the practice of Hinduism and by giving money to those who were affected by it. He also employed Hindu officials. Real Islamic history in the sub-continent begins with the Turkish Afghan invasions in India, and it was then that Islam first made an impact

⁴²⁹Prospectus (London: Buddhist Society, 1996) 12.

on Indian society. Ironically, most of these invasions were against other Muslim rulers and either acquisition of power or the reinforcing of Islam amongst its practitioners was the prevalent motive rather than spreading the religion. There is a great difference between the conquest by the Arabs with their cultural strength and the conquest carried out by the barbaric Turkish Afghans.⁴³⁰ It must be observed that when there is tolerance it is not described as Islamic, but once violence is introduced then the Islamic label is readily applied. It is also relevant to note that the animosity towards Islam is felt more acutely where the Muslims entered as conquerors and displaced the resident communities rather than when they came as traders. It was immaterial for the chroniclers whether their conversions were brought about by force or peacefully. It is essential to delineate facts that are largely ignored in non-Muslim literature. Most of Africa, and South eastern countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, Burma, were then also Muslim countries, but these had been converted by wholly peaceful means and not by military conquest.

Even while this stereotype of the intransigent Muslim was being propagated, a more reasonable attitude, which had been evident even as early as the sixteenth century, was also exhibited by western writers and persisted well into the Victorian Age. Richard Hakluyt, in his early Travels, tells how "two Christian slaves are forcibly circumcised and forced to recite the words which would make them 'Turk'. The men refused to perform the latter command. Hakluyt explained that the reality of the situation was that the two were desired by the Turkish

⁴³⁰D.P.Singhal, India and World Civilization (London: Sidgwick, 1972.) 2: 9, 158-164.

Sultan's son and that the orders were carried out in 1584 at his behest.⁴³¹ The mendacity of these Muslims in observing Islamic injunctions was also evidenced in the execution of this enforced 'conversion' in areas outside of Muslim control.

The Islamic quality of tolerance towards other religions was recognised by the people in cities near Hims in 635 when the Muslims peacefully occupied the area. Simon Ockley reports the event as "They persuaded their leaders to sue for peace, as the Arabs killed those who opposed them and protected those who submitted to them and stood by their word".⁴³² This realistic appraisal was, however, ignored by later writers who preferred the more prevalent and vituperative statement that Islam "owed its progress and establishment almost entirely to the sword".⁴³³ Lytton also expressed the prevailing belief that the multitudes of Spain only followed the religion of the Muslims out of political policy and not out of faith as they belonged to the enlightened people of Europe.⁴³⁴ In terms of western triumphalism this was expressed by Murray as: "Whenever the Moslem arms imposed the faith of Muhammad, as they did throughout so many of the kingdoms of Asia, the conquerors held sway down to the nineteenth century. Wherever they failed to do so, as they everywhere did fail in Europe, the fruit of their triumphs has always been insecure".⁴³⁵ In Turkish dominions it was also said that, after the destruction of the Byzantine Empire, the Greeks were still permitted to worship within their own faith, and allowed to elect

⁴³¹Richard Hakluyt, Voyagers' Tales (London: Cassell, 1886) 53.

⁴³²Ockley, 1: 181.

⁴³³George Sale, The Koran; Commonly called the Alcoran of Mohammed: Translated into English immediately from the Original Arabic (London: Tegg, 1869) 35.

⁴³⁴Bulwer, Leila 13.

their own officials. The Sultan appointed the Patriarch only after consultation with the Phanar whose authority was almost absolute. But the Greeks abused this privilege and obstructed all power except their own, in particular they resisted the rule of the Pashas and Cadis, who failed to counter them. By wily misrepresentations to the Phanar they could dismiss a rigorous governor. The hereditary Pasha, with no income of his own, was caught between the tyranny of these people and that of the Sultan to whom all officials had to answer. Thus the Pasha either became a tyrant and rebelled against the Sultan or a timid instrument of the primates.⁴³⁶ Kinglake, writing in Eothen of his journey to the east undertaken ten years before, gives his personal reactions in lively descriptive passages. He states that he avoids introducing antiquarian research, scholarly learning, or religious knowledge. Kinglake observes that in Smyrna, which was something of an exception to the usual picture, the Greeks preferred "groaning under the Turkish yoke" to "being the only true source of legitimate power" in their own land. Kinglake also states that "There is no spirit of propagandism in the Mussulmans of the Ottoman dominions". On the contrary "an attempt to disturb the religious repose of the empire by the conversion of a Christian to the Mahometan faith was positively illegal".⁴³⁷

Writing about India, Blunt states, apparently in good faith if erroneously, that the Arab traders came to the west of India with the double mission of propagating faith and making money. They used persuasion for purposes of

⁴³⁵Murray, Memoirs 7.

⁴³⁶ Murray, Memoirs 8.

⁴³⁷Kinglake, 42, 208.

expansion and achieved this through peaceful preachers.⁴³⁸ According to recorded history Muslim trade missions established routes and were followed by religious men who would satisfy the needs of their own community. They were venerated because of their good works, and influenced those of other beliefs who thus began to come within the fold. This has been the reason for the expansion of Islam in India, Africa and the Far East. Shaw was to express a different opinion, stating that Napoleon classed Muhammadanism as perhaps the best form of popular religion for modern political purposes, and as one which might have some uses. In Androcles and The Lion he concludes that, if religious doctrine were separated from the political necessity which often acts in its name, there would be no religion more tolerant in matters of faith than Islam.⁴³⁹ These words about the use of the latent quality of Islam as a political weapon were to prove the depiction of political changes in the Muslim world always being linked to Islam. This was illustrated by indigenous conquests of the Muslim dynasties of India and the Wahhabi's in Arabia; or by colonial enforcements in India and Turkey as suggested by Hunter and Blunt.

Even in present times Islam has continued to provide a convenient platform for achieving political ends. It has been employed both by local aspirants and foreign interests in Muslim countries. Recent examples of the culmination of these efforts were discernible in the Gulf conflict and the massacres in former Yugoslavia when Islamic identity was forcibly devolved upon the perplexed Bosnians.

⁴³⁸Blunt, Ideas About India 86 .

ACCEPTANCE OF CONVERTS

Another reason for confusion amongst western writers was Islam's successful propagation and its complete acceptance by all voluntary converts, in comparison with other religions. Contrary to the image of Islam imposing exclusivity, people from all religions can visit a mosque which is essentially a meeting place with the sole exception of those in Mecca and Madina. As no sacrament is required in Islam any place can be used for worship. Thackeray described the mosque of Sultan Achmed, which he said could be entered by any infidel without molestation. He also watched an audience of women listening to a preacher, but was told to move on by a Turk.⁴⁴⁰

Scott's The Talisman revolves around the existence of an amulet brought back from the Holy Land by a Scottish crusader and preserved in the family. The story tells of a Scottish Knight, Sir Kenneth, who fights inconclusively with a Saracen emir and befriends him. The Emir proves to be Saladin himself who goes to the sick Richard's camp and cures him with a Talisman. In the meantime Kenneth has been disgraced and only escapes execution when the Saracen physician takes him as his slave. Saladin generously allows him to return to Richard's camp as a black mute slave and in this guise he saves Richard from an assassination attempt. Richard discovers his saviours identity and allows him to redeem his honour. Kenneth defeats and wounds his accuser and is also revealed to be a Prince of Scotland who can marry the Plantagenet Princess he loves, their birth being equal. Scott also graphically describes Muslim accomodative ability

⁴³⁹Shaw, Prefaces 604.

while commenting on Muslim-Christian relations; the Saracen tells Sir Kenneth that, to the followers of Issa b. Mariam (Christ), we are like a shield and we will respect and honour him even if the light of the Prophet has not shone on him. The latter clause is incorrect as all Muslims revere Christ as a predecessor of Muhammad and believe that he will reappear at the end of time to save the world from the anti-Christ. Islamic tolerance was not totally unacknowledged. Sir Kenneth protests that he would be apostatising if he were to go to Saladin's side. The Muslim replies that Saladin only makes converts of those on whom the light of the Prophet willingly shines.⁴⁴¹ This revelation leads to a discussion between the two, and comparisons are made between Christian and Muslim missionaries.

Some of the literature of the period makes it clear that the writers did recognise differences in practice which did not always show the Christians as more tolerant. David Morier in Photo expressed Christian intransigence when his Dhimo says : "... promise me absolution for knocking that Turk on the head", and "No good Catholic ever yet went to the evil one merely for sending an odd Turk or two thither before his time".⁴⁴² Blunt, on the other hand, predicts greater success for the Muslim since he invites the black to immediate equal status, unlike the Christian who offers brotherhood only in the next world.⁴⁴³ Hunter was to concur that the Muslims offered "plenary privileges of Islam to Brahman and outcaste alike".⁴⁴⁴ Religious intolerance was more frequently manifested by

⁴⁴⁰Thackeray, Cornhill To Cairo 122.

⁴⁴¹Scott Talisman 190.

⁴⁴²D. Morier, Photo the Suliote 6: 93.

⁴⁴³Blunt, Future of Islam 26.

⁴⁴⁴Hunter, Musalman 151.

others, including the Hindus who were also highly selective about the people they admitted within their community. Hindu selectivity was described by the Earl of Dunmore in a diary of 1892 recording his travels, when he said that there was a Hindu temple in Kashmir to which no Muslim was given entrance.⁴⁴⁵

MUSLIM TOLERANCE

That Muslims were tolerant of new converts as well as of practitioners of other religions, whether as a result of religious piety or of economic pragmatism is demonstrated in Bernier's observations that "India never became a thorough Muhammadan country". Quoting from an article in The Calcutta Review (no. civ 1871) Bernier said that the minority Muslim invaders had to depend on the majority Hindu populace for labour of every kind. Eventually the Muslims had also to depend on the Hindus in order to recruit for their army.⁴⁴⁶ In reality Muslims displayed manifest non-interference in the practice of other religions in their domains. Tolerance of other religious practices almost bordered on indifference, especially when they permitted publicly horrifying customs such as the burning of Hindu widows at the funeral pyres of their dead husbands. Bernier says that the Muslims by whom the country was governed did all in their power to suppress this barbarous custom. They did not forbid it because they do not interfere in the free exercise of the religion of the majority but checked it by indirect means including the requirement that permission must be sought from the provincial Governor before a Hindu widow sacrificed herself. The official only

⁴⁴⁵Earl Dunmore, The Pamirs (London: Murray, 1893) 27.

⁴⁴⁶Bernier, 40.

gave permission after doing his best to dissuade her by making enticing promises and by even sending her among the women of his harem to try the effect of their remonstrances.⁴⁴⁷ It took the direct intervention of British colonists to put an official end to the custom of *suttee*. The Ottomans also carried this non-interference to a reprehensible extreme when they did not interfere with the witch hunts and burning at the stake in Hungary during the Calvinist-Lutheran struggle. It is significant to note that the victims of these perceived religious malpractices in both countries were mostly women and that they may have been regarded as expendable by all the cultures concerned.

Tolerant opinion existed in respect of all practical details of the life of minority populations while the Muslims were in the ascendant. Henri Pirenne writes that, in reality, "the Muslims assimilated the civilisations and not the religions of the conquered territories, and did not expect to make converts of their subjects".⁴⁴⁸ This assimilation was made obvious in India where there was great harmony as a result of the tolerance accorded to each caste and creed with a recognised position in the social family. Thus opposing elements, like the Hindu Brahmin and the Muhammadan nobleman, lived together under a system which precluded class rivalry, a state of affairs which was even reported in the periodicals of the century.⁴⁴⁹

Closer to reality than his official submissions was Hunter's fictional account of the situation in The Old Missionary, a novel set in India in the early days of the

⁴⁴⁷Bernier, 306.

⁴⁴⁸Pirenne, Henri. Mohammed and Charlemagne (London: Allen, 1939)150.

⁴⁴⁹Notes and Queries No. 92 (3 Oct. 1857): 267.

century. The novel tells of an old sailor, Trafalgar Dawson, who settles down as a hard-working missionary in Northern Bengal. His experiences are the pre-text for a close historical reconstruction of Indian life from 1820-50. Respect for other religions was also demonstrated by Hunter when he described in his novel the scene at the Missionary's funeral: "Crowds of Musalmans of all ranks, from the senior native magistrate and the officials at the mosque to the shopkeepers from the closed bazaar, lined the wayside and salaamed as the coffin passed".⁴⁵⁰

OTHER RELIGIONS

The observation of the Islamic custom of allowing other religions to practice without fear was widespread. The Muslim capacity for cohabitation with peoples of all creeds was a fact of life, as was manifest when the Muslims were in a position of power. This manifestation of tolerance was to prove a double-edged sword as close habitation with other cultures also led to the imbibing of their customs. Familiarity was to breed acceptance of many insidious cultural effects, some of which it would have been better to avoid. The fact that this integration between Islam and Christianity became commonplace is illustrated in Eden's book when she records that, while on shikar for tigers, the British group encamped near a Hindu temple. There "the tolerant Brahmins allowed her to sketch and to look at the idol from outside. While the Muslim servants took off their shoes and went in to salaam to the idol".⁴⁵¹ This incorporating of other religions was a factor which sparked the Muslim revival movement in India. Tolerance was taken to such

⁴⁵⁰Hunter, The Old Missionary (Oxford: Frowde, 1895) 136.

⁴⁵¹Eden, Tigers 23.

an extreme that Islam was in danger of losing its identity. Gradually, with the changes in the world situation, there was a slipping away of religious power, so that the Muslims themselves were becoming subject to alien forces. There was an awareness that Muslim identity was being threatened on more than one front and this gave rise to various indigenous reactions. One of these attempts at preventing their religion from complete dilution with others produced the revolution based on the teachings of Ibn Taymiyya, a Muslim theologian and led by Ibn Wahhab in Arabia. This was to have a cataclysmic effect on the Muslims themselves as it involved drastic purges of manifestations of Muslim deviations from Islamic strictures. Its impact was so great that its effects are still reverberating in a post colonial world about to enter a new millennium. This movement was essentially aimed at the Muslims, as an attempt to set them back on the path from which they had deviated. A basically iconoclastic religion was developing totems completely alien to it. As with a revolution this process tended to have a snowball effect and many unfortunately praiseworthy ideas suffered along with those which needed to be expunged. In spite of the fact that this uprising, and other similar ones which followed, was directed more against co-religionists who were perceived to be straying from Islam, the British empire and outside powers sought to combat these movements as direct attacks on their rule, seeing them as motivated by religious zeal. While in certain cases where the Muslims were being oppressed this may have been true, generally Muslims were guided by the *ayahs* of the Qur'an that enjoined equal consideration for all those who believed in the one God. The

relevant Qur'anic *ayahs* may have been any one of these (2:62, 111, 113,120, 135, 140 and 5:14, 18, 50, 69) which are similar in content to:

VERILY, those who have attained to faith [in this divine writ], as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Christians, and the Sabians - all who believe in God and the Last Day and do righteous deeds - shall have their reward and their Sustainer; and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.(2:62)

INFIDELS

Even though the Wahhabbi revolution was resisted by the Muslim representatives of the debilitated Ottoman Caliphate, a concept of infidels under siege, similar to that mounted by the Wahhabis, was transferred to other Muslims with great facility. These events were prolifically described by western writers, particularly in English literature. Morier wrote in Journey Through Persia that the British Government knew that the Arab pirates who plagued their ships were under the protection of the Wahhabee.⁴⁵² The situation in Persia was not very different. According to Morier, the King of Persia “in consequence of his reverses, had distributed alms, ordered prayers in mosques, and the denunciations of vengeance on all unbelievers to be read from the Koran”.⁴⁵³ It is not surprising therefore to read in a report from the times entitled “PERSIA” a column which sets out the text of the *Firman* read in mosques throughout Persia inciting the population to take arms against Britain. The words of the *Firman* were in accordance with the Islamic requirement of self defence when attacked, one couched in the politest of terms and in accordance with Persian culture. The

strongest terms are: “---- you will assist me to defend with valour and energy our honour and dignity, which have been my rule of conduct as they have been that of my ancestors”. This was in response to the invasion of the Persian Gulf by British ships, in utter disregard of treaties and diplomatic appeals.⁴⁵⁴ The Qur’an was again misused by another political leader with a different agenda, Ali Pasha exhorted the Albanians to fight against the Suliots, (according to his personal and expedient interpretation) because it was written in the Qur’an that, even after the destruction of the Ottoman empire, Albania would be preserved if it was firmly united. These uprisings culminated in major troubles in India with the focus on Muslims even though all religious groups had participated in returning the deposed Mughal king to power. A venerable sheikh was produced who expounded passages from the Qur’an giving them the same interpretation as that given by Ali Pasha.⁴⁵⁵

One result of the insurrections against the British in Afghanistan was that such passages appeared in novels as the one quoted below. In Kaye’s Engagements a dying Englishman explains to a compatriot the difference between friend and foe as perceived in the concept of loyalty held by the Afghans against whom they are fighting. He declares that “the Afghan would cut your throat, because you are a kaffir - one of the hated tribe of invadersbut he would strike down the arm raised to kill me, because he knows that I have rendered him a service”. While some of the Afghans aligned themselves with the British forces,

⁴⁵²Morier, Journey Through Persia 372.

⁴⁵³Morier, Journey Through Persia 30.

⁴⁵⁴The Times, (4 March 1857) 12.

the leader of another ethnic group living in Afghanistan disapproved of this. A Hazara chief wished to harness religion for his side in the rebellion against the Afghans and the Ferenghees alliance. He was prevented from doing so by the Qur'anic *ayahs* discussed earlier which qualified them as righteous. The chief then overcame this obstacle by declaring the instruction to be pertinent to the Prophet's time only.⁴⁵⁶

The fallout from the Wahhabi revolution was to be global and it was to provide oppressed Muslims with an opportunity for restoring their hurt pride by fighting against the "infidel". Murray wrote in his Memoirs of the restoration of Mecca and Madina from the Wahhabis, "- the sectarian oppressors of the true Moslems," by the Egyptian Muhammad Ali.⁴⁵⁷ The Egyptian Alliance was faced by the artificial dilemma of dealing with a Christian whose presence was an offence, but although he was "...a dog of an infidel", it was argued that, since Muhammad Ali had made friends with these Franks, it was wrong to strike or insult them in the streets without cause.⁴⁵⁸ In the Sudan a marabout was quoted as saying that the time has come "when Islam is to rise all together in its might against the hordes of the infidel" and the Mahdi of Sudan declared that in the near future "Islam shall no longer obey the dogs of Christians".⁴⁵⁹ Concerning the situation in Arabia in 1871 there was a special article about "The Wahabee" in the weekly journal All the Year Round published from London. It was understandable

⁴⁵⁵Davenport, Pasha 137.

⁴⁵⁶Kaye, Engagements 124, 351.

⁴⁵⁷Murray, Memoirs 1: 42.

⁴⁵⁸Murray, Memoirs 1: 87.

⁴⁵⁹Allen, 2: 19.

that great interest was aroused in this a comparatively new sect of Muslims, who appeared dramatically on the world stage and who presented radical ideas.⁴⁶⁰ Rudyard Kipling's knowledge of the various participants in the uprising in India is evident from his poem, "What Happened":

"Killar Khan the Marri chief, Jowar Singh the Sikh,
Nubbee Baksh Punjabi Jat, Abdul Huq Rafiq -
He was a Wahabi. ⁴⁶¹

PROPHECY

In the aftermath of the events in 1857 a public inquiry was held to consider the similarity of prophecy amongst the Hindus and Muslims. W.S. in Notes and Queries, asked for information about a letter from E.A.W. of Haslebury published in the Record of 23 September 1857. This letter states that for fifty years Muhammadans have been looking for power in India, which is to be achieved in 1857, and E.A.W. quotes from relevant manuscripts, journals and from the letters of Henry Martyn (2 vols) 1857. A Pundit had told Martyn of a prophecy published in holy books that English Rule would last 100 years. A king's son born then would bring about the change. The Muslims also expected a great event at about the same time. W. S. would like a translation of this to be made from Muslim books.⁴⁶² The Hindu Book of the Future does indeed foretell a time when all men shall be of one religion and caste and the Vishnu Parana, compiled at the time of Hindu victory over Buddhism, admits that eventually, in the Iron Age (now), all souls will be blessed or achieve "liberation" by purity of life and

⁴⁶⁰All the Year Round New Series no. 151(21 Oct., 1871): 486-491.

⁴⁶¹Kipling, Early Verse 16.

⁴⁶²Notes and Queries Series II no. 92 (3 Oct. 1857): 267.

rectitude of action and not as a result of religion or race.⁴⁶³ Khan refuted Hunter instantly and said that the poems and songs circulating amongst Muslims, in particular the Prophetic Poem foretelling the downfall of the British and other coming events, were nothing new and had first been published by “Saint Vali Nyamut Ullah, a dervish of Cashmere, who died in 1028 Hijra or 1618”.⁴⁶⁴ In any case the volatile situation that prevailed all over the Empire did not require extraordinary prophetic powers to predict insurgencies and rebellions.

In spite of genuine Muslim efforts to achieve a different effect the centuries old fear of Islam was still echoed by Kipling in his “Vision of Hamid Ali”:

And whether Islam shall arise again
And drive the Christ across the Western sea
As people hold shall be in two more years,
When from the North the Armies of the North
Pour like the Indus and our rulers fly,
And Islam and the Sword make all things clean. ⁴⁶⁵

RETALIATION

The misconception that there is a Muslim imperative of retaliation is related to other preconceived ideas about the sanguinary methods employed by Muslims. Amongst the most widely prevalent of these was the belief that the phrase 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth' represented the epitome of Muslim behaviour. It is obvious that nothing could be further from the true Islamic concept of retribution than this widespread error. According to the Qur'anic *ayahs* (2:178), permission for just retribution is granted, but not as a

⁴⁶³Hunter, Musalmans 118.

licence for literal revenge. On the contrary the stipulation of 'an eye for an eye' is to act as a limit to the extent of retaliation, which must never exceed the harm caused. A practical alternative of blood money as compensation for the loss inflicted is specified, and even then forgiveness is enjoined. This qualification becomes particularly relevant in the light of the custom of blood feuds which Islam was particularly concerned to eliminate. These were part of tribal practice and led to the loss of numerous innocent lives. The following *ayahs* of the Qur'an were revolutionary in bringing to an end this senseless bloodshed.

And we ordained for them in that [Torah]: A life for a life, and an eye for an eye, and a nose for a nose, and an ear for an ear, and a tooth for a tooth, and a {similar} retribution for wounds; but he who shall forgo it out of charity will atone thereby for some of his past sins. And they who do not judge in accordance with what God has revealed -- they, they are the evildoers! (5:45)

These and similar *ayahs* (2:178, 4:92) were then translated into codified law, wherein the specification for 'blood-money' for every kind of injury was introduced, a code which proved a more practical alternative to punishment and execution.⁴⁶⁶ If a person's guilt is proved in a Muslim court, after undergoing detailed investigation of witnesses and evidence, then the punishment is decided and, where appropriate, a distinction is made between murder and manslaughter.

The Qur'anic *ayahs* pertinent to this situation are:

And upon him who has slain a believer by mistake there is the duty of freeing a believing soul from bondage and paying an indemnity to the victim's

⁴⁶⁴Khan, 33.

⁴⁶⁵Kipling, Early Verse 273.

⁴⁶⁶Karim, 490.

relations, unless they forgo it by way of charity.

(4:92)

In spite of this clear injunction for the exercise of charity, Ockley recorded the contrary practice in a letter from the Caliph Umar to Abu Ubaidah, his Governor, on the eve of the conquest of part of the Byzantine empire. He explained that the concept of retaliation is described as Mosaic, which modern Rabbis interpret as pecuniary, but that the Muslims act in a manner contrary to this and that the judge is obliged to let an injured person have satisfaction.⁴⁶⁷ Kipling alluded to a quid pro quo situation in "The Ballad Of East And West":

"A gift for a gift," said Kamal straight; a limb for the
risk of a limb. "Thy father has sent his son to me, I'll
send my son to him!" ⁴⁶⁸

Hamilton was to repeat the same idea in A Vizier's Daughter in a remark made about a Muslim character who was actually acting according to Islamic stipulations: "He is no Muhammadan, he has forgotten the ancient law, 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'".⁴⁶⁹

Well before these writers, Morier had even based a short story, Misselmah a Persian Tale, (1847) on this very concept. The book, which was inspired by an anecdote of John Chardin, was published in aid of Irish charities. It led to Sir Walter Scott hailing Morier as the best contemporary novelist on the east, and as one who provided the equivalent of a hallmark or a royal stamp on silver, to credit unknown authors on the subject. Morier began the story by saying: "We cannot but smile at a person such as the Persian Shah Abbas being described as 'the Great', consider what nation must call such a being". Morier also says that he will

⁴⁶⁷Ockley, 1: 175.

⁴⁶⁸Kipling, Early Verse 236.

spare the English reader as many Mohammedan names as he possibly can and so calls the Persian Shah's even more despicable general of artillery Top Beg. According to Morier, retaliation for this man's cruelty and jealousy had led to the extirpation of the general's harem by the Shah.⁴⁷⁰ The story Misselmah describes Top Beg returning from a successful military campaign with captured slaves from Georgia who include the beautiful Misselmah and Ferhad, her lover. The members of the Shah's harem are jealous of the new beauty, whom they can observe from their abode, situated at a higher level than Top Beg's. They conspire to peep into General Top Beg's harem in order to incite the general into reckless action and so bring him into disfavour. Falling into the trap Top Beg orders anybody who looked into his palace from the Shah's harem to be shot, causing some fatalities and wounding Ferhad who has become the Shah's favourite. In spite of being warned against pursuing this action by the Shah the General persists. The angered Shah retaliates by appointing Ferhad to superintend the execution of his command which was an order to decimate all the inmates of Top Beg's harem. The Shah bases his orders on the alleged belief that: "The law of retaliation is ever imperative upon a Muhammadan".⁴⁷¹ Ferhad executes the command but secures Misselmah's life by asking the Shah for a reprieve for her, a request which is gratefully granted.

Though this story was obviously a caricature of general practice in respect of vengeance in the eastern world and was totally un-Islamic, the concept of

⁴⁶⁹Lillias Hamilton, A Vizier's Daughter a Tale of the Hazara War (London: Murray, 1900) 23.

⁴⁷⁰James Morier, Misselmah, a Persian Tale (Brighton; Saunders, 1847) 7. Henceforth Misselmah

retaliation in fact extended world-wide and was just as reprehensible wherever it was found. Unfortunately this misconception of Islamic behaviour has perpetuated itself both in the minds of Muslims and non-Muslims and has had a retrograde effect on society as a whole.

PRAYER

Another example of the fascination of the western writer with Muslim practice is the theme of haunting sounds which provoke various responses. This relates to the Muslim call to prayer, a source of endless fascination for observers of the religion. The call has also provoked diametrically opposing points of view. The Islamic ritualistic prayer is always said in Arabic. However, the personal supplication can be made in any language the individual prefers. Southey was to make a mistake, in common with many other writers, when he said that "Every Musalman, from the peasant to the prince, ought to say his prayers in one of the sacred languages, Persian or Arabic".⁴⁷²

Muslim practice has five specific times for prayer which are preceded by the call to prayer wherever possible. The times for the Muslim prayers which involve regular prostrations are set according to specific stipulations aimed at avoiding confusion with worship of the sun. These are: *Fajr*: The early morning prayer from dawn to daybreak. *Zuhr*: The early afternoon prayer which begins from the declining of the sun to late afternoon. *Asr*: The late afternoon prayer which ends just before the setting of the sun. *Maghrib*: The sun-set prayer which

⁴⁷¹Morier, *Misselmah* 46.

⁴⁷²Southey, *Works* preface, 13,14.

begins after sunset and ends with the disappearance of the red signs in the horizon.

I'sha: The night prayer which begins after this and ends at midnight.

These prayers, if missed, can be said at a later time, but there is a strict injunction regarding the avoidance of prayers at the rising, zenith and setting of the sun.⁴⁷³

The actual call to Muslim prayer is also always in Arabic and this must be the sonorous effect which has aroused differing responses amongst writers of English.

It is generally as follows, the exceptions being insignificant :

Allah is great (four times) I bear witness that there is none worthy of being worshipped except Allah (twice) I bear witness that Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah (twice) Come to prayer (twice) Come to success (twice) This is followed twice by Prayer is better than sleep, only at the call for the early morning prayer. Allah is great (twice) There is no deity but Allah (once).

The word '*azan*', which is used for the call to prayer, actually means announcement, and in extremely rare cases it was used as a mode of summoning the faithful for reasons other than prayer. In Vathek Beckford reports that the viziers order the muezzins to make the call for prayer in order to detract attention from the Caliph's outrageous behaviour.⁴⁷⁴ Walter Scott, while keeping to the spirit of it, documents the incomplete call as: "To prayer - to prayer! God is the one God - To prayer - to prayer! Muhammad is the Prophet of God.-To prayer - to prayer! Time is flying from you.-To prayer - to prayer! Judgement is drawing nigh to you".⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷³ Muhammad S. Siddiqi The Blessed Women of Islam (Lahore: Kazi Publications, 1982) 58.

⁴⁷⁴ Beckford, 27.

⁴⁷⁵ Scott, Talisman, 287. Southey Roderick, 88.

However, most writers made mistakes in their account of the timing of *azan* or call to prayer. These discrepancies are generally minor, involving the time of prayer, something which seems of no consequence to outsiders. On the contrary these are serious lapses for those professing the faith as they are seen as totally against religious practice. Beckford, for example, mentions the call for prayer as being made at break of day.⁴⁷⁶ Morier makes the same mistake as Beckford when he writes in Zohrab: "the stillness of the morning had been broken by the cry of the Muezzins from the Mosques to announce the morning prayer at break of day".⁴⁷⁷ The call is always made before daybreak so as to avoid what could be misapprehended as the worship of the sun. David Morier in Photo also makes the error when he says: "... a Christian clock, which, just then striking the hour of noon, mingled its profane sound with the orthodox chant of the muezzin, who seemed to wait the signal to begin his call to noon prayers".⁴⁷⁸ Thackeray, reminiscing about his travels from Cornhill to Cairo, recalls the sound of the *azan* and says that Turk and Jew prayed at that time in which each adores the Father, who is equally above all. "Cavil not, you brother or sister, if your neighbour's voice is not like yours; only hope, that his words are honest (as far as they may be), and his heart humble and thankful".⁴⁷⁹

Kipling, resonating the previous expressions, says in "The Vision of Hamid Ali": "... when the Muezzin called to prayer/ At midnight from the Mosque of

⁴⁷⁶Beckford, 43.

⁴⁷⁷Morier, Zohrab 1:1.

⁴⁷⁸D Morier Photo The Suliote 1: 55.

⁴⁷⁹Thackeray, Cornhill To Cairo 301.

Wazeer Khan”.⁴⁸⁰ He too is mistaken, for the last call for prayer is soon after sunset and long before midnight. After that any prayers that are said are voluntary and do not require an *azan*.

Writing on a different note, the following authors may have confused the call for prayer which is chanted out loud with the ritual prayer with that which is normally recited silently by individuals. However the spirit of the ritual, if practised with the correct intent, seems to have been captured by Robert Hichens in The Garden Of Allah of 1904: “this long sound of prayer moved her to the soul, made her full, very full of compassion for everybody and everything, and as if prayer were a cord binding the world together”.⁴⁸¹

The misconceptions discussed above do not display the same malevolence found in others, but they also tend to distort the fundament of the faith of Islam and so do not contribute to any effect other than diminishing the authenticity of the writers who chose to employ them.

QIBLAH

Of a similar kind are the misconceptions amongst western writers about the direction in which Muslims say their prayers, in spite of the fact that the Qur’an and consequently the Muslims are very clear about the conflict regarding the direction of prayer. The Qur’an specifies clearly:

True piety does not consist in turning your faces
towards the east or the west. (2:177)

And that:

⁴⁸⁰Kipling, Early Verse 272.

⁴⁸¹Robert Hichens, The Garden of Allah (Bath: Cedric Chivers, 1904) 163.

.... every community faces a direction of its own, of which He is the focal point. (2:148)

Within sixteen months of the Prophet's migration to Madina, and after praying for nearly twelve years towards Jerusalem, this was revealed:

We have seen thee [O Prophet] often turn thy face towards heaven [for guidance]: and now We shall indeed make thee turn in a direction which will fulfil thy desire. Turn, then, thy face towards the Inviolable House of Worship; and wherever you all may be, turn your faces towards it [in prayer] (2:144)

That is exactly what the Muslim community, praying alongside the Prophet, did and the mosque in Madina is renowned because of this incident.

This change from praying in the direction of Jerusalem obviously caused great displeasure amongst the Jewish community of Madina, but it was not the sole cause of friction, as the Muslims were already undergoing great harassment, after the initiation of their call, and even at a time when they were praying in the direction of Jerusalem. The change was made basically to sift between genuine Muslim believers and those who paid lip service to the Prophet yet were sedulously creating more problems for him. The Prophet was constantly looking for Divine guidance which eventually came in the form of these *ayahs*. The observation of praying in the direction of the *qiblah* wherever possible is enjoined upon Muslims, but when they are unable to do so it is equally valid to pray in any other direction. Precise mathematical direction is not necessary, general orientation is sufficient as is practiced in certain mosques which were built when such calculations were not possible.

Even the direction of Muslim prayer, the *qiblah*, has aroused great controversy, something which is clear from the confusion of references to it. Walter Scott refers to it in the Talisman: "The moslem turned towards his keblah, the point to which the prayer of each follower of the Prophet was to be addressed, and murmured his heathen orisons."⁴⁸² Moore shows some confusion when refers to it in Lalla Rookh: "And down upon the fragrant sod kneels with his forehead to the south".⁴⁸³ Considering that the poem is set in the Indian sub-continent this is a completely wrong direction, as Mecca lies west of India.

James Morier was to prove prophetic in Hajji Baba of Ispahan when he says that the relations of a deceased bigoted Mussulman are told "...the bed upon which he lay must be unfortunate; ... the foot of the bed had not been turned towards the kebleh".⁴⁸⁴ This is a singularly unfortunate suggestion as Muslims expressly avoid doing this and a British official during the Raj was even murdered by his Indian orderly for doing so.

Osborn is again totally mistaken when he says that "after the change of Kiblah, those who did not comply (Jews) were declared infidels, the faithful were to cease commerce with them and particularly not read their (so called) sacred books".⁴⁸⁵ This seems fabricated as, according to Muslim sources and up to the present, Muslims continued to revere the books of the Jews. The Muslims continued to buy from Jewish shops and, as stated above, the siege of the Qaynuqa is recorded by chroniclers from both sides as being initiated by an incident caused

⁴⁸²Scott, Talisman 52.

⁴⁸³Moore, Lalla Rookh 400.

⁴⁸⁴Morier, Hajji Baba 142.

by the insulting of a Muslim woman who came to buy some jewellery at a Jewish shop. Muslims also associated with Jews to the extent of freely partaking of meals with them, apparently helped by the similarity in regulations regarding food. The Prophet himself continued to do so even after expelling the tribes from Madina and nearby areas. It turned out to be hazardous for him as he is thought to have succumbed to a poison found in the meat served by a member of these displaced Jews. The poison is said to have been so potent that though Muhammad spat it out, it debilitated him causing an illness that eventually killed him. Osborn was mistaken when he stated that the changing of the *qiblah* from Jerusalem to Mecca had disastrous consequences for the human race. According to him, if Muhammad had not done so then the Arabs could have 'entered the religious comity of the nations as peace-makers, not as enemies and destroyers'. Also, according to Osborn, the change brought the Muslims into direct antagonism with the Jews, by providing them with their own centre. Osborn seems to overlook the fact that the Muslims initially prayed only in the direction of Jerusalem (which is still held sacrosanct by them) and that even then there was no dearth of Jewish instigation against the Muslims, something which always led to conflict between the two.

This misconception of the direction of Muslim prayer has been needlessly employed as it serves very little purpose except to cause confusion. It appears to have been a focal point amongst western writers but, since it has little effect on their belief, Muslims are not particularly concerned about this error. The

⁴⁸⁵Osborn, 57.

unnecessary depiction of it, however, again brings the veracity of the writer into question.

The next ritual under discussion is the physical practice of prayer in Islam. This has also provoked a consistent fascination amongst western observers who wrote about it and depicted it in different forms. This was done whenever Islam was mentioned, till it was eventually adopted as a standard depiction of Muslims. However, even in mundane non-regal situations, the only descriptions in consonance with Islamic stipulations are those of Clair - Tisdall, who describes the reverence of Muslims at prayer and the Mosque's noble simplicity as commendable.⁴⁸⁶ Hull, in The Sheikh, also describes: an old Arab who "was placidly absorbed in his devotions, prostrating himself and fulfilling his ritual with the sublime lack of self consciousness of the Muhammadan devotee".⁴⁸⁷ Hichens romanticises this, but unconscious cultural differences add a misrepresentation to a colourful description: "The personal pride which, like blood in a body, runs through all the veins of the mind of Muhammadanism, that measureless hauteur which sets the soul of a Sultan in the twisted frame of a beggar"... "was not cast off in the act of adoration. These Arabs humbled themselves in the body. Their foreheads touched the stones. Yet they were proud in the presence of Allah, as if the firmness of their belief in him... and hatred for those who looked not towards Mecca gave them a patent of nobility. Despite their genuflexions they were all as men who knew, and never forgot, that in them was conferred the right to keep on their head-covering in the presence of their king: With their closed eyes they

⁴⁸⁶Clair-Tisdall, 32.

looked God full in the face".⁴⁸⁸ Islam does provide dignity to man by removing all social distinctions and endows a sense of superiority over others, not because of hatred for other religions, but because of the knowledge of being on the guided path. Muslim men may or may not keep their headcovering on while praying as a matter of culture, but this is not as a religious stipulation. During the annual pilgrimage it is specifically required that men should be bareheaded. The depiction of the Muslim at prayers seems to have inspired awe in the western chroniclers of the nineteenth century. This, at times grudging, admiration did not, however, diminish the number of erroneous depictions. This is another of those distortions which have not had a retrograde effect on Muslim society or on the understanding of Islam. Again misconception only affects the validity of the western writer's information or research.

PROSTRATION

Another manifestation of western misconceptions of Islam, similar in effect to the one last discussed, concerned the Muslim act of prostration during prayer. The prostration is a limited one, as it involves bending on the knees first and then touching of the forehead to the ground supported by bent arms. Other religions of the east manifest prostration to a greater degree but only Islam is automatically associated with such an act, as the persistent images in the arts testified in the nineteenth century and as they do even now.

⁴⁸⁷Hull, 174.

⁴⁸⁸Hichens, 165.

As a result of this fascination with the Muslim act of prayer only one step further was needed for another overemployed device in the depiction of the Muslim courts to be created. The custom in question is the introduction of the practice of prostration in nineteenth century works, whether in the theatre, paintings or literature. This is a practice that is specifically opposed to the Islamic belief that no one is worthy of prostration except Allah. To prostrate before anyone or anything is tantamount to the denial of the omniscience of God. Even the Prophet Muhammad was to be revered in a strictly limited manner and did not qualify for prostration, so the question of doing so before lesser mortals does not arise.

Ockley refers to this misconception when he describes the eastern manner of prostration, saying that Zeid Ebn Waheb touched the ground with his forehead in front of his master, whose permission he sought, before he could go to the Caliph Umar on behalf of Abu Ubaidah with the Message of victory at Antioch.⁴⁸⁹

Adam Mez, again referring to this custom, states that "The old Arab Muslims regarded kissing the ground in front of a man as an invasion of God's privilege." He explains that the Byzantine ambassadors would not do so before Caliph Muqtadir in 917, in reciprocation of the exemption in court etiquette that had been granted to the the Muslims. Mez further an example from the beginning of the eleventh century when a Chief of Police rebukes his clerk for wishing to kiss the ground before him by telling him not to do so: "Tis a custom of tyrants."⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁹Ockley, 1:316.

⁴⁹⁰Adam Mez, The Renaissance of Islam Translated by S. Khuda Baksh & D.S. Margoliouth (London: Luzac, 1937) 137.

There was to be a brief reversal of this custom in 1008, during Caliph Al-Hakim's reign, people used to kiss the ground at even the mention of his name. However, when this very man reverted to Islamic ideals, he forbade this practice and the use of the title 'Maulana'. His successor, Zahir, however, revived all these practices.⁴⁹¹ Bernier refers to it in his Travels: "The Mughal Aurangzeb wanted to surrender all the keys of the gates of the fort so that he could come in security to visit his father the Emperor of India "for the purpose of kissing his majesty's feet".⁴⁹² Morier In the Second Journey to Persia writes that when presented to the Shah of Persia the British Ambassador bowed normally, while the Persians bowed with bodies at right angles with hands on their knees and legs slightly apart. Only on remarkable occasions do they make the prostration of "Rouee Zemeen" i.e. "falling upon the face to the earth and worshipping, as Joshua did".⁴⁹³

Writers in English refer to this practice as a general attempt to convey alien practices. Morier refers to it in Misselmah where Ferhad "fell on his face and kissed the ground" in front of Shah Abbas and begged for Misselmah's life.⁴⁹⁴ In Mirza of 1842, Morier writes that the court jester prostrating himself before the melancholy Shah exclaimed "Kebleh of the world! as I am your sacrifice".⁴⁹⁵ In Murray's Hassan, Amina kisses the hem of her father's robe when he does not make any sign of paternal embrace.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹¹Mez,139.

⁴⁹²Bernier, 63.

⁴⁹³Morier, Second Journey 172

⁴⁹⁴Morier, Misselmah 55.

⁴⁹⁵Morier, Mirza 1:48.

⁴⁹⁶Murray, Hassan 2:136.

These misrepresentations were not only ignorant but have perpetuated an incoherent depiction of the Muslims, intensified by the further use of such discredited accounts upto the present times, and are particularly evidenced in theatrical representations.

OATHS

Another favoured device of western writers in describing Muslims is the use of colourful oaths in order to suggest authenticity. Unfortunately it often manages to do the opposite as a result of the misuse of ill- chosen words. It is sufficient to briefly state that these oaths are contrary to Islamic strictures which in fact discourage their use and stress the gravity of employing of such words, specifying that oaths must be taken only on Allah's name or on the Qur'an. Even in general use the informed Muslims use the name of Allah to express their feelings, and expressly avoid invocations of any other being.

According to Hawari the source for the countless use of 'Wullahy' (by Allah) by nineteenth century writers, was Torrens' translation of The Arabian Nights.⁴⁹⁷ Simon Ockley, in his History Of The Saracens, explains the use of the term by Arabs as an acknowledgement of God's Omnipresence and not as a profanation. He quotes Governor Abu Ubaydah shouting "Wallah" translated as By God at Khalid, the general of the Muslim forces during the conquest of Damascus. The incident occurred during an altercation in which the Governor

⁴⁹⁷Hawari, 72.

protested at the mistreatment of some Damascenes to whom protection had been extended by some soldiers under Khalid's command.⁴⁹⁸

An extended play upon these oaths is found in Morier's Hajji Baba of Ispahan, where the narrator says that he met Hajji Baba by chance in Tocat where he had stopped for a rest. The servant of Hajji Baba asked him to meet his master who was undergoing treatment and needed cheering up. Knowing Hajji Baba he visited him and heard his tale of woe of an Italian charlatan masquerading as a doctor. It was later discovered that the doctor had little knowledge of medicine and less of Arabic. His Arabic vocabulary consisted only of the terms "mashallah" and "inshallah" which were consistently misapplied. Hajji Baba then explains how he detected the fraudulent doctor by his misuse of words of commiseration, 'I began by telling him that I was very ill. All he said in answer, with a grave face, was "Mashallah! Praise be to God!" Enraged, Hajji responded "But I shall die man!" The doctor replied gravely "Inshallah! Please God!" and set about the proper treatment and as a result Hajji Baba recovered. The story suggests the extent to which such oaths were known in the west, and their supposed prevalence.⁴⁹⁹ In spite of knowing the nuances involved in the above exclamations, however Morier makes a fundamental mistake in using the term "Bismillah, in the name of the Prophet!" in his other novels.⁵⁰⁰

Thackeray used a similar device to add to the humour of his Major Gaghan when he has the Major use the terms "all true men will follow Loll

⁴⁹⁸Ockley, 1:113.

⁴⁹⁹Morier, Hajji Baba 3.

⁵⁰⁰Morier, Zohrab 6: 214, Ayesha 7, 309

Muhammad! Allahhumdillah, Bismillah, Barikallah?"⁵⁰¹ He then adds in a note that the Major puts most approved language into the mouths of his Indian characters, as they form the very essence of eastern conversation. Bernier, however uses the terms effectively in his Travels when he quotes the Persian ambassador saying as "Billah! billah! Ispahan cannot be compared to the dust of your Delhi". Bernier notes that this term is the colloquial equivalent of "By God!" and forms part of a Qur'anic *ayah*. He also describes simultaneous swearing upon the Qur'an, the head and the beard of the Khan, "'Mashallah!' he said 'a cheatingdog like you to lay your dirty hands on our Antar'",⁵⁰² a totally incorrect usage. Disraeli in the earlier Alroy uses similar expressions: "By the holy stone, a dead man" and "By the stone of Mecca". In a note Disraeli explains that the Kaabah is to the Muhammadan as the Holy Sepulchre to the Christian and that "It is the most unseemly, but the most sacred, part of the mosque at Mecca, and is a small, square, stone building".⁵⁰³

The misuse of certain prayers and oaths by western writers may have its origin in the prolific use of these by Muslims. However this basis in personal observation does not decrease their contribution as a distorting factor into the understanding of Islam, even though the effects are again more benign than some of the others which have been mentioned above.

⁵⁰¹Thackeray, Gagahan 276.

⁵⁰²Bernier, 153,55, 33.

⁵⁰³Disraeli, Alroy 45, 47.

FIGURAL REPRESENTATION

Another common misinterpretation by both Muslims and non-Muslims, which has had extensive effects, is the theory that pictures of animals are forbidden in Islam. This is one of the few misconceptions to have produced almost no malevolent results, and consequently may have contributed to the creation of beautiful works of art such as the arabesque. It is still interesting to study its development as it contributes positively to the effect of preconceived notions on manifestations of Muslim behaviour. That figural representation is prohibited in Islam is a belief that has acquired widespread circulation amongst Muslims. Contrary to accepted belief there is no specific mention of this stricture against the depiction of animals or humans in art form in the Qur'an. However there are *hadith* which mention the Prophet's dislike of such material. The expediency of this discouragement of figures by the Prophet is understandable, considering the essentially iconoclastic nature of Islam and the danger of the predilection of the new converts towards idol worship. One result of this iconoclasm was the flowering of the Islamic art of calligraphy, and, since it was not a Qur'anic injunction, the depiction of the human and animal form has continued to be found in Muslim culture. Great controversy has ensued amongst Muslim scholars writing about this issue, which surfaced again with the development of the photograph. Al-Faruqi has come up with an interesting theory regarding the rejection of figural representation and icons. She relates it to the Semitic fear of idolatry and the underlying motivation of the Second commandment of the Old Testament. This idea also played its part in the art of the ancient Mesopotamian

culture. Al-Faruqi says that as a result of a world view based on *tawhid*, there is an “unmistakable unity in Islamic art which defies its wide distribution in time and space”. In visual art it is manifested as abstract art where nature is disguised and transfigured by the negation of mass, volume, depth, perspective, space, enclosure, gravity, cohesion and tension. She cites the example of miniaturists and says that the portrayal of Beauty which expressed something other than nature was “the real essence of the Trancendent.”⁵⁰⁴ This does not co-relate very well with the incident described by Cyril Glasse in the Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam in which the Prophet is supposed to have saved an icon of the Virgin and child and ordered everything else inside the Kaabah to be painted over.⁵⁰⁵ The Qur’anic *ayahs* which describe the wonders of Solomon's palace include "statues", making it difficult to reconcile with the total dismissal of figurative art. The fact that figurative art continued to be found in all kinds of Muslim art whether it was textiles, carpets, metalwork, porcelain, incense burners, or glazed tiles which are sometimes found in mosques, also proves that there was a toleration of these images and that this apparent ban should be kept in perspective. Therefore the latter day fear of lapsing into idolatry and strict injunctions against art do not have supremacy over Muslim opinion. This difference of opinion even filtered down to western writers as evidenced in Thomas Moore’s explanation, in Lalla Rookh, that Muslims are supposed to prohibit all pictures of animals, but Toderini says that they are no more averse to this than other people even though the Qur’an forbids it. He quotes a Mr. Murphy who says that the Arabs of Spain had no objection to

⁵⁰⁴Al-Faruqi, 18, 21-23

figures in paintings.⁵⁰⁶ However these writers generally subscribed to the iconoclastic view expressed in the Dictionary of Islam, compiled by the Reverend Patrick Hughes, who quotes from a Muslim book of traditions, Hughes says: "It is unlawful for a Muhammadan to have an image of any kind in his house".⁵⁰⁷ During his travels in India Edward Lear also describes the Fort of Gwalior in his journal, saying that there are "some extremely old temples and lots of statues, defaced by Mussulmen piety".⁵⁰⁸ The continuation of this misconception will not effect the religion of Islam or the Muslims. However, if allowed to proliferate, the distortion will result in the unfortunate destruction of more such valuable artefacts. This destruction would be a great loss to posterity and to the culture of all nations and religions.

CONCLUSION

The study of these various misconceptions, many of which continued into and beyond the Victorian Age, provides evidence for the conclusion that there was a persistence of stereotypes which must have resulted from a conscious decision of the writers who employed them. This was probably a result of a wish to add 'local colour' as well as of a conventional restatement of the assumed superior virtues of the western and Christian way of life. The Muslims were by now incapacitated by illiteracy and colonisation and so unable to raise their voice to explain the situation. Therefore, not only was a continuity of misconceptions maintained, but

⁵⁰⁵Glasse, see "Mary" 261.

⁵⁰⁶Moore, Lalla Rookh 368.

⁵⁰⁷Patrick Hughes Dictionary of Islam see "images" quotes Mishkat, book xx ch.v 202.

⁵⁰⁸Lear, 84.

a frivolous attitude was introduced together in parallel with an orchestrated increase in the dissemination of these stereotypes in the service of Empire. The study of these misrepresentations of Islamic concepts leads one to conclude that the ignorance of Islamic belief and ritual led to the erroneous depiction of Muslim behaviour by writers of English literature. This was something which could be ignored as trivial if it were not damaging in many ways to the perception of Islamic belief. If these misconceptions are allowed to continue without amending, as they were in the nineteenth century, they would move beyond the realm of stereotypes and could become reality for uninformed assimilators now on both sides.

CHAPTER VIII - MUSLIM WOMEN

The persistent questions regarding the status of women in Islam which emerge in western literature of the nineteenth century are best understood by restating the fact that what Islam gave women, Muslim society took back. Unable to bury infant girls alive in the sand as in pre-Islamic days, they decided to bury them behind walls and covers. This is one aspect of the Muslim custom where misinterpretation is understandable, because ample evidence is apparently provided, or paradoxically not provided, by Muslim behaviour. The situation in this case is made complicated because, Muslim women being secluded, there are very few first hand accounts of their customs. Further confusion is created when, in spite of allegations to the contrary, the Qur'an exists as a religious text which, though accepting different roles for men and women, maintains the equality of the two sexes. This parity was also corroborated by the practice of the Prophet in his dealings with women, whether related to him or otherwise. Then there is the reinforcement provided by the consequent development of the theology of Islam, which, though patriarchal in spirit, enjoins the greatest of respect and rights for women.

The fact that an image of Islam contrary to that found in these exhortations has been widely formed can be attributed to the changing attitudes of Muslim societies. These societies, by incorporating the cultural and religious influences of other communities with whom they were in contact, completely deviated from

what was exhorted in the Qur'an and from the example set by the Prophet. The distorted image of Muslim womanhood was further strengthened by western writers with their misinterpretation of the situation and their deliberate misreading of certain *ayah* of the Qur'an. This image has almost become a self fulfilling prophecy.

The contrast to the false image provided lies within Muslim society. The contribution of women, academic or otherwise, to the cause of Islam, was massive and publicly acclaimed. It began with the unquestioning acceptance of Islam by Khadija the Prophet's wife, who was of independent means and the second person to convert to the nascent religion. The poetess Khansa, who insisted on being called the greatest poet both among men and women, voluntarily joined the ranks of other formidable Muslim women along with her husband and six sons in Madina. In Islam's darkest moment after the conquest of Mecca, during the battle of Hunayn when Muslim men were abandoning the Prophet in the face of imminent defeat it was a Muslim woman who warded off attackers on his life. Umm Amara saw the gravity of the situation when she went to the battlefield to tend to the wounded, picking up a sword she joined the fray. Ill-equipped she defended Muhammad so bravely that he shouted to the fleeing Muslim men, to at least leave their shields behind to be used by those who were still fighting. During the battle she lost a hand but achieved victory. Such heroic women would surely not have accepted any situation that was to be detrimental to their welfare. This Islamic respect for womankind was extended to active participation of women in the field of financial and public management as well. Examples of these were provided by

Sauda one of the Prophet's wives who sold leather goods made by her during her husband's lifetime and outside it, and by Shifa who was appointed the market manager in Madina by the Caliph Umar. In the educational field the contribution was even greater and was sustained upto the nineteenth century, with acceptance based on ability and independent of social standing. Apart from the contribution of the Prophet's family a prime example amongst other contemporaries is Umm Waraqa, who because of her expansive knowledge of the Qur'an was frequently consulted by the Prophet concerning theological matters. She had also been given permission by Muhammad to lead both the men and women of her household in prayer. These honours led Umm Waraqa to be distinguished also by the Caliph Umar when he disbursed money from the state treasury.⁵⁰⁹ This is made apparent particularly in the earliest indigenous records of the contribution of women to the development of *hadith* and *fiqh*. Apart from their male counterparts the outstanding traditionalists and scholars of the following generations were Hafsa the daughter of Ibn Sirin, Umm al-Darda the Younger (d.700) and Amra bint Abd al-Rahman. Umm al-Darda was considered the most superior traditionalist of her time, as well as a judge of exceptional ability. Amra's students included a celebrated judge of Madina who was ordered by the Caliph Umar II to record all the traditions on her authority. These women were followed by others from diverse backgrounds, such as Abida al-Madaniyya who, though a slave, impressed her master, the great traditionalist of Spain, so much that he freed and married her. In contrast Zaynab bint Sulayman (759), a kinswoman of the founder of the

⁵⁰⁹Naila Minai, Women in Islam (London: Murray, 1981) 16.

Abbasid dynasty, was also a distinguished traditionalist. Four academics Fatima bint Abd al-Rahman (924), Amat al-Wahid (987), Umm al-Fath (999) and Jumu'a bint Ahmad commanded reverential audiences at their lectures. Fatima bint al-Hasan (1087) was known for her mastery of calligraphy and of the *hadith*. Some female scholars specialised in different texts, the distinguished Karima al-Marwaziyya (1070) was considered the authority on Imam Bukhari. She was emulated by Fatima bint Muhammad (1144) who was awarded the proud title of *Musnida Isfahan*. Shuhda (1178), and Sitt al-Wuzara (1316) followed her example, and, along with Umm al-Khayr (1505), they also lectured in Damascus and Egypt. Umm al-Khayr (1137), and Fatima al-Shahrazuriyya lectured on the *Sahih* of Muslim. Feminine scholarship is alleged to have declined towards the end of the twelfth century but the following evidence is an indication to the contrary. Records show that numerous women attended lecture series in a class of hundreds of students held in the Umar Mosque at Damascus in 1288 and in Aleppo in 1336. Amongst other women Umm Abdullah also lectured to a mixed class of more than fifty students in 1433 at Damascus. Two punctilious scholars, Juwayriya bint Umar (1381) and Zaynab bint Ahmad (1322), travelled widely in pursuit of *hadith* and lectured in Egypt as well as Madina. Bint al-Kamil (1339), who had acquired numerous diplomas, lectured on Abu Hanifa and taught Ibn Batuta during his stay in Damascus. Ibn Asakir was amongst the celebrated male academics, who had been taught by eighty women. He obtained the *ijaza* of Zaynab bint Abd al-Rahman for the *Muwatta* of Imam Malik. Al-Suyuti studied the *Risala* of Imam Shafi with Hajar bint Muhammad. Ibn Khallikan, among others, attended the

lectures of Zaynab bint al-Shari (d.1218). Karima the Syrian (1218) lectured widely on the *hadith*. Daqiqa bint Murshid (1345) was instructed in *hadith* by many women. Amongst women who combined other subjects with theological studies was Umm Hani Maryam (d.1466). After studying theology, law, grammar and history, she travelled to Cairo and Mecca in the pursuit of *hadith*. She lectured intensively in the great colleges of Cairo, giving *ijazas* to many scholars. Umm Hani Maryam had numerous contemporaries in the milieu of the time. One of these was Asma bint Kamal al-Din (1498) who wielded great influence with the sultans and their officials. Recommendations made by her were always accepted by them. Another academic Aisha bint Muhammad (1500) was appointed professor at the Salihiyya College in Damascus. These women were closely followed by Fatima bint Yusuf of Aleppo (1519) another great scholar as was Umm al Khair (1531), who even granted an *ijaza* to a pilgrim at Mecca. The last known woman traditionalist was Fatima al-Fudaylia (1831) who received many diplomas and excelled in Islamic sciences. She settled in Mecca, founded a rich library and was attended by eminent traditionalists. Fatima al-Fudaylia lectured and distributed certificates amongst scholars such as Shaykhs Umar al-Hanafi and Muhammad Salih.

It is evident from this selection of women scholars, that, throughout this period, women took their seats as interactive students and teachers in public educational institutions alongside men.⁵¹⁰ What is interesting to note is that all these ladies, whether married or not, retained their individuality in the various

descriptions attached to their names. They did not subsume themselves in their husband's names unlike those who have recently adopted the western custom of doing so. All this evidence points to a contrasting social situation, to the one which is generally portrayed in nineteenth century English literature, and which is now accepted in Muslim societies as well. It is also important to note that records of women scholars stop with the advent of the colonialism of that time into the Muslim world. The coincidence of these two factors may be more significant than is usually accepted and needs to be studied in detail. Of all the issues discussed in the area of misconceptions about Islam, that of gender has provided considerable material for discussion amongst both later Muslim and western observers. The seclusion of urban Muslim women led outsiders to draw erroneous conclusions, once it became an issue in the west, something which was particularly marked in the nineteenth century. Indigenous Muslim women had accepted the apparently unfair situation not because they regarded it as demeaning or because they lacked power, but because it generally suited them. They were and are generally acquiescent because they have been empowered by the advent of Islam, to which the women of Mecca and Madina had extended whole-hearted and voluntary support. This confidence, though progressively eroding, was well served upto the nineteenth century. As observed, the Muslim woman's rights continued to be enshrined in Islam, and no one could deprive her if she chose to assert those rights. That is why chauvinism in society, a result of cultural variations, does not cause undue distress to the Muslim woman, as it can be redressed on the basis of religion.

⁵¹⁰Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi, Hadith Literature its Origin, Development and Special Features

However the issue was brought to the forefront in the nineteenth century, when western writers focused on the lot of the Muslim woman in particular, while neglecting the wretched condition of her community as a whole. Muslim communities occupied by colonialists were generally under siege and their womankind extended them full support in their struggle. In the process of overcoming the crisis, Muslim women had their rights usurped by the very men they supported.

COMMON HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Perhaps some of the obviously ridiculous ideas about Muslim women proliferated because they had also found sympathetic ground in which to breed, as by then western and other eastern ideas about women were not so different from those of the Muslims in the nineteenth century. Going further back in time the idea of male superiority can be traced, in Desmond Clark's dating, for over four million years,⁵¹¹ when the protohumans created specialised groups of the hunter male and the nurturing female.⁵¹² This gave rise to the idea of male ascendance which stereotyped its way through the folklore of the civilisations of both the east and the west⁵¹³ into religious texts. The books which "first preserved traditional tales in writing are eastern: Mesopotamian tablets, Egyptian papyri, the Bible, the works of Homer, ...*The Jatakas, the Panchatantra* and later the *Book of Sindibad* and the *Ocean of the Streams of Story*". From these were drawn the "*Disciplina*

(Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993) 117-123.

⁵¹¹E. L. Ranelagh, *Men on Women*, (London: Quarter, 1985) 6.

⁵¹²Ranelagh, 7.

⁵¹³Ranelagh, 5.

Clericalis, Spanish *Cuentos*, the *Decameron*, French fabliaux, *The Canterbury Tales*, La Fontaine's *Contes* and *The Arabian Nights*".⁵¹⁴ All of these works in some way uphold ideas of male supremacy which have filtered down to the present day social attitudes.

It must be pointed out that, though the Qur'an is not included amongst these misogynist texts, it was eventually appropriated towards the same attitude by chauvinistic interpretations and by a deliberate ignoring of those statements which were in favour of women. This method gave rise to an endemic sense of superiority among the Muslim men and a containment of feminine independence.

WESTERN ATTITUDES

A similar conditioning of the Victorian mind can be gathered from the words of Lord Tennyson's speaker in "Locksley Hall":

Weakness to be worth with weakness! woman's pleasure women's
pain -

Nature made them blinder motions bounded in a shallower brain:
Woman is the lesser man and all thy passions, match'd with mine,
Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine"⁵¹⁵

This image of women's fickleness was not difficult to transfer to Muslim women.

It is also found in Thomas Moore's poem "Inconstancy", which is particularly concerned with Julia's deception:

.....Oh, woman! your heart is a pitiful treasure;
And Mahomet's doctrine was not too severe,
When he held that you were but materials of pleasure,
And reason and thinking were out of your sphere.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹⁴Ranelagh, 3.

⁵¹⁵Tennyson, 95.

⁵¹⁶Moore, Works 49.

In Granville Barker's The Madras House, Constantine Madras who has converted to Islam, while deploring the Suffragettes and the progress of women's rights, objects to married professors at Oxford and Cambridge. He patronisingly comments: "Women haven't morals or intellect in our sense of the word". He wants women to be pretty and waiting at home for men. Thus with them shut away from public life and exhibition the men might regain their masculinity.⁵¹⁷ This attitude, as it existed in nineteenth century Britain, was also clearly observed in Coventry Patmore's poem "The Angel in the House" as well as in The Daughters of England by Ira Strickney Ellis which is described as "one of the most popular early-Victorian manuals of advice for middle class girls". Deborah Gorham quotes this advice taken from the manual: 'As women, then, the first thing of importance is to be content to be inferior to men - inferior in mental power, in the same proportion as you are inferior in bodily strength.'⁵¹⁸ It is interesting to note that ideas of the subordination of women, as observed in the above examples, are absent from a vademecum of orthodox conduct for Muslim women published in nineteenth century India called *Bihisti Zewar*.⁵¹⁹ This was a book that eradicated the superstition and other non-Islamic practices which had been assimilated from other cultures into Muslim life. Faced with such encompassing rights it is not surprising to find women content within Islam. This was a generally prevalent attitude, which was at such variance to the general image of Islam that it elicited an inexplicable response from Irving. He explained that, when such Muslim women

⁵¹⁷Granville-Barker, 103.

⁵¹⁸Deborah Gorham, The Victorian Girl (London: Helm, 1982)101.

did exercise their right of choice by espousing Muhammad's cause, they did so because they were "ever prone to befriend a persecuted cause".⁵²⁰ Constantine Madras describes women in London as "kept" by their husbands "or if they live on their dividends kept by Society". Madras also criticises the ignominious treatment of women industrial workers who are prisoners free to starve in an "industrial seraglio" that would sicken a Muslim. These workers are exploited by the men and then made redundant. For such treatment of potential motherhood, Madras says his Prophet would condemn a man to hell. Fearing for posterity because of the low birth rate Madras passes an indictment on the prevailing social attitudes towards women. For Madras the well kept women are flattered and aestheticised till they won't give birth, while the poor women are worked so hard at market rates that they are unable to do so.⁵²¹

ANTHROPOLOGY

Another factor that may have been responsible for the focus of western writers on Muslim women, may have paralleled the way in which other comments suggest an indirect criticism of religion at home. It may have been the expression of suppressed wish-fulfilment, as at times the absence of females from the scene would have been desirable for chauvinists in western societies as well. Victorian misogynist attitudes were also observed in the apportioning of blame for the revolt of the Indian subjects in 1857 to the arrival of British women in the colony. This

⁵¹⁹Mohammad Masroor Khan Saroha, Heavenly Ornaments: The English Translation of Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi's Bahishti Zewar (Karachi: Darul-Ishaat, 1987).

⁵²⁰Irving, 74.

⁵²¹Granville Barker, 105-106.

manifestation leads one to agree with Leila Ahmed's conclusion that the Victorian male establishment appropriated internal feminism in order to justify undermining the colonized peoples.⁵²² The conquerors used anthropology to establish male superiority as well as to confirm the supremacy of their own culture. Anthropology and feminism served as handmaidens to colonialism. Ahmed illustrates this with examples of European interventions in nineteenth century Egypt which were retrograde for the populace in general and for women in particular.⁵²³ Muhammad Ali's land reforms, by forcing the males into building projects and military duties, led to an exacerbation of peasant dispossessions, leaving the women and children to assume tasks previously reserved for men, which included harnessing themselves in place of water buffaloes, (one result of a shortage of draught animals) as well as taking over the work of cultivation. They often migrated into towns to eke out a living as domestics. In 1882 the British occupation of Egypt further reversed the trend of Khedive Ismael's moves towards education by instituting charges for government education just as it began to be more in demand.⁵²⁴

In a study about the peasants of the Maghreb, Germaine Tillion says that, in common with other Muslim societies, they also have for centuries disregarded the rights of inheritance of their daughters, because it would mean land going out of their tribe, in the case of women who married outside it.⁵²⁵ This provided another

⁵²²Leila Ahmed, Women and Gender in Islam Historical Roots of a Modern Debate New Haven: Yale UP, 1992) 151.

⁵²³Ahmed, 132, 155.

⁵²⁴Judith.E.Tucker, Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985) 42.

⁵²⁵Germaine Tillion, The Republic of Cousins (London: Al-Saqi, 1983) 145.

excuse for the practise of endogamy, and with it the use of the veil, which is also prevalent in these areas. It has been found that "The maximum degree of alienation, for women, is encountered in mutant populations, ones detribalised by recent sedentarization or urbanization".⁵²⁶ The influx of comparative wealth and feminine physical differences made it both convenient and possible for men to appropriate them. This debasement of the female condition is also a general phenomenon in the rest of the world. Although the prevalent seclusion of women is to be found in the whole area around the Mediterranean, the institution of the harem has drawn greater attention to the Muslim shore on the South.⁵²⁷ The Italian women in Gargano, for example, have an invisible frontier which limits their movements within the interior districts of the Christian shore of the Mediterranean. There are also the customs of vendetta and stoning for adultery.⁵²⁸ The practice of not allowing daughters to inherit property is also widely prevalent in the non-Muslim societies along the shores of the Mediterranean. In France the laws of the land are violated daily, to the detriment of women, and mainly to conserve French "domains" and "family business". According to Tillion, "The status of women in Europe thus appears marked by an archaic Nordic, liberal tradition opposed, over the centuries, by three Mediterranean influences", those of Roman law, the Catholic Church, and the Napoleonic Code. This directs social customs in France, where, until recently, married women were legally considered minors, and were

⁵²⁶Tillion, 150.

⁵²⁷Tillion, 18.

⁵²⁸Tillion, 167,169.

unable to request a passport or a bank account without a husband's authorisation.⁵²⁹

Another similarity between the societies of Europe, Africa and Asia Minor, is that they “picked and chose” both from Christianity and Islam “what served to consolidate their positions”. Christianity found its chosen terrain in countries influenced by Germanic law where women were accorded their due status, while Islam had to do battle with a “social phenomenon whose relationship with it resulted essentially from geography, not from theology”.⁵³⁰ Leila Ahmed agrees with this when she says that social institutions gave licence to misogynist prejudices which were indigenous to the area before the arrival of Islam, as well as incorporating those from other religions through their converts. This was reflected in the different interpretations given by the Abbassids and the Kharijite to the same Qur’anic *ayahs*. However Ahmed seems to retract her earlier statements when she says “Nonetheless, a misogynist reading was undeniably one reading to which Islam plausibly lent itself”.⁵³¹ This in itself is a curiously self-defeating deduction, especially after her previous acceptance of the fact that there is more than one interpretation to the Qur’anic *ayahs*. To clarify the position of Muslim women a study of the relevant *ayahs* concerning women becomes necessary.

⁵²⁹Tillion, 140,139.

⁵³⁰Tillion, 136,137.

⁵³¹Ahmed, 87.

ISLAMIC BACKGROUND

The distortion of Muslim women's image becomes self-evident after a detailed study of the Qur'an, which continually asserts and preserves the equal rights of women beginning with those in infancy, when it admonishes the pagans:

And (thus, too) they ascribe daughters unto God, who is limitless in His glory - whereas for themselves (they would choose, if they could only) what they desire: (58) for, whenever any of them is given the glad tiding of (the birth of) a girl, his face darkens, and he is filled with suppressed anger, (59) avoiding all people because of the (alleged) evil of the glad tiding which he has received, (and debating within himself:) shall he keep this (child) despite the contempt (which he feels for it) - or shall he bury it in the dust? Oh, evil indeed is whatever they decide! (16: 57-59)

It is imperative to point out that keeping a female child as an object of contempt is just as reprehensible as burying it alive.⁵³² It is obvious that the deprecation of women referred to in these *ayahs* of the Qur'an is that which is thought to be in the minds of pagans and that it does not represent Divine injunction, as is sometimes alleged by misinterpreters.

The continuing deterioration of women's rights and their marginalisation in crumbling Muslim societies led observers from the west to deduce that Muslim women were a non-entity.

SOULS

Therefore the incredible supposition, common among western writers till the nineteenth century, that Muslim women had no souls, was not surprising, as the

⁵³²Asad, see foot-note 66: 403.

treatment accorded to them left room for no other conclusion. The nineteenth century images of women, especially Byron's, were echoes of thoughts found earlier in Samuel Johnson's Irene (1736) which tells of Irene, a Greek slave, who was loved by the Emperor Mahomet and who succumbed to her fate as a result of the supposed inherent weakness of her sex. The idea is expressed in these lines:

Vain raptures all - for your inferior natures
Form'd to delight, and happy by delighting,
Heaven has reserved no future paradise, ⁵³³

Byron's poem, The Bride Of Abydos, tells of Zuleika, the Turkish Pasha's daughter. She is in the process of being rescued by Selim from marrying an elderly Bey. She thinks that Selim is her brother but he turns out to be a cousin who is actually a pirate. They are prevented from escaping by her father's arrival with his army. Selim is killed in the conflict and Zuleika dies of grief at his loss. Before dying Byron's Zuleika muses over the fact that: "Where woman's parted soul shall go,/ Her Prophet had disdained to show".⁵³⁴ In Byron's "To Eliza" the same fate is pondered over: "Eliza, what fools are the Mussulman sect,/ Who to woman deny the soul's future existence".⁵³⁵ Byron also questions this in "The Giaour". While commenting on the beauty of Leila's eyes, the poet asks how anyone could uphold such a belief "Which saith that woman is but dust / A soulless toy for tyrant's lust?" ⁵³⁶ This idea was so popular that it was continued into works of fiction as well as non-fiction. It was expressed in a novel by Grant Allen. When Meriem is asked how she can find it in her soul to marry Ahmed "I've got no

⁵³³Mohammed Hassan Asfour, "The Crescent and the Cross: Islam and the Muslims in English Literature from Johnson to Byron" Diss. Indiana U, 1973, 40.

⁵³⁴Byron, 181.

⁵³⁵Byron, 35.

soul, 'Meriem interrupted, - 'We Mussalman women are born without any.'⁵³⁷ In E.J.Davis's study of the Ottoman Empire, published in 1879, he says that some Turkish women are said to have believed that they had no souls and he reveals that they repeated after the imam "we are asses. we are beasts".⁵³⁸ Irving also mentions this mistaken belief that the female sex has no soul.⁵³⁹

These thoughts have formed such an integral part of the image of Muslim women in the mind of western writers, that, as early as the eighteenth century, George Sale had to seriously discount them as baseless in his "Preliminary discourse to the Koran".⁵⁴⁰ In the same way, Wollaston in 1886 had to point out, in a sumptuous description of paradise, that Muslim women do have souls.⁵⁴¹ Pardoe also says that Europeans have been made to believe erroneously that Turkish females neither enter mosques nor possess souls. She was able to test the first allegation by finding that the doors of the mosque were only closed to women during the midnight prayer and that, amid their lords' voluptuous paradise, there is a place for women though "there is a little harem-like mystery flung over the destiny that awaits her".⁵⁴²

Western writers cannot be blamed for this misrepresentation, for these totally un-Islamic strictures are what they thought they actually observed. Although these writers may not have been aware of it, as most Muslims are also

⁵³⁶Byron, 168.

⁵³⁷Allen, 1: 136.

⁵³⁸E.J.Davis, Life in Asiatic Turkey (London: Stanford, 1879) 247.

⁵³⁹Irving, 352.

⁵⁴⁰Sale, 73.

⁵⁴¹Wollaston, Half Hours With Muhammad (London: Allen 1886) 179.

⁵⁴²Pardoe, Bosphorus 386.

ignorant of it, there is a unique sect in Syria called the Alawi or Nusayri, which forms six per cent of the population, and which is a relic of either the Shiite Sevener movement or of pre-Islamic Christian Gnosticism. This sect believes in the transmigration of souls and does indeed conclude that women have no souls, a concept that is "absolutely contrary to Islamic doctrine".⁵⁴³

QUR'ANIC *AYAHS*

From the Islamic point of view, this is too preposterous an idea to be even conceived. Equal opportunities of access to either heaven or hell exist for the souls of all men and women, there are no sex barriers and religious duties are also equivalent for both genders.

Soon after the Prophet's death, Muslims started to ignore the many Qur'anic *ayahs* which stated the equality of the sexes, such as the ones about the creation of woman from the same source as man. It may not be incidental that the Arabic word for denoting purity "*nafs*", which is used for the source of both souls, is feminine, and even now is being vigorously disputed by male interpreters

IT IS HE who has created you (all) out of one living
entity, and out of it brought into being its mate, so
that man might incline (with love) towards woman.
(7:189)

This is followed by the idea of equal responsibility for the concept of original sin, in which both Adam and Eve are tempted:

Thereupon Satan whispered unto the two with a view
to making them conscious of their nakedness, (7:20)
Both commit the sin equally:

(121) And so the two ate [of the fruit] thereof: and

⁵⁴³Glasse, see "Alawi" 30.

and thereupon they became concious of their nakedness
and began to cover themselves. (20:121)
and jointly accept the blame:

The two replied: "O our Sustainer! we have sinned
against ourselves - and unless Thou grant us
forgiveness and bestow Thy mercy upon us, we shall
most certainly be lost!" (7:23)

Both are granted a reprieve.

These *ayahs* represent a revolutionary attitude to the role of women as they do not
portray Eve as the enticer, nor does she bear the stigma of being a member of the
weaker sex. The fruits of women's labours are seen to be equally rewarded as in:

"I shall not lose sight of the labour of any of you who
labours (in My way), be it man or woman: each of
you is an issue of the other". (3: 195)

Both men and women have a common destination for their souls:

(124) whereas anyone - be it man or woman- who
does (whatever he can) of good deeds and is a
believer withal, shall enter paradise, and shall not be
wronged by as much as (would fill) the groove of a
date-stone. (4:124)

In spite of these Qur'anic exhortations which clearly upheld women's rights
as no other religious text had done before, Muslims were very quick to deprive
women of their independence.

MUSLIM LAPSES

The manifestation of erroneous Muslim behaviour led Noldeke to make a
mistaken presumption when he states that Muhammad left the position of women
as it had been among the Arabs, and that the husband could summarily divorce his
wife. He says that the most objectionable parts of the Qur'an are those concerning

women.⁵⁴⁴ While there are some *ayahs* that may seem ambiguous, if taken literally and out of context, they were never interpreted as misogynist by either the Prophet himself nor by the scholars and jurists who followed him. Unfortunately over the years Muslim society started to impute motives to Qur'anic *ayahs* other than those accepted in the lifetime of the Prophet and manipulated certain exhortations to suit their own requirements. The chauvinists achieved this by erroneously alleging that supposedly anti-feminist *ayahs* had superseded the above *ayahs* in their minds. This tendency is what led to an aberration in the image of Islam which has prevailed until the present. Sadly the distorted image became so potent that it took over reality, not only amongst outside observers of the religion, but amongst men who practiced it and the women who were subjected to the malpractices of it.

These alleged anti-feminist Qur'anic *ayahs* also warrant a closer study as even these are not understood properly.

INHERITANCE

Of all the Qur'anic injunctions those which are most frequently allowed to lapse are those which deal with the treatment of women and especially the ones relating to the laws of inheritance which are ensured in these *ayahs*:

CONCERNING (the inheritance of) your children, God enjoins (this) upon you: The male shall have the equal of two females' share; but if there are more than two females, they shall have two-third of what (their parents) leave behind; and if there is only one, she shall have one-half thereof. (4:11)

⁵⁴⁴Noldeke, 46.

The great innovation of such a momentous ruling, introduced in an agrarian society like that found in Madina 1400 years ago, when women had no rights of inheritance, tends to be overshadowed by the undue importance accorded to the pronouncement that half a share shall go to a daughter as compared to a son. The abhorrence of a tribal society at the idea of the allotment of any portion of their ancestral land to a woman⁵⁴⁵ was as great then as it is now, because it was thought that this was indirectly placing it into the hands of her husband. They did not realise that by acting as they did they were perpetuating a vicious circle because, when they deprived womankind of her place in society they were automatically crippling her independence and ability to maintain the ancestral property on her own. It would be an intrepid Muslim woman who would overcome all the handicaps she was saddled with by cultural and social factors.

The fact that a son's share is two-thirds while that of a daughter's is one-third results from the situation where close male relatives in a Muslim society have a moral responsibility for the maintenance of their womenfolk. No matter how great the imbalance in their financial status, the male relative still has to look after the females who fall within his care. The men cannot neglect this duty as they could then be held reprehensible under Qur'anic Law. The men are thus given a greater share, so that they can equitably perform their duties. The female relative, on the other hand, is not encumbered with any financial responsibilities. She has the option of earning a living if she so desires but possesses the inalienable right to be maintained by her male relatives as enjoined in:

⁵⁴⁵B. Sivaramayya, Women's Rights of Inheritance in India (Madras: Law Journal, 1973) 126.

MEN SHALL take care of women with the bounties which God has bestowed more abundantly on the former than on the latter, and what they may spend out of their possessions.(4:34)

This alleged imbalance of the status of the sexes in financial terms cannot be upheld because, according to another Islamic ruling, a mother's share is equivalent to that of a father in the case of an offspring dying before the parent's demise. A woman also had the freedom of choice of either working or staying at home. The property she inherited was exclusively under her control and she could dispose of it in whichever way she wanted. It was rather like pin money for her, and certainly did not represent her livelihood. When a woman married she also had direct control of the dower, which was to be paid to her on contract. None of her relatives had the right to question her use of it, and this included her husband. Thus, instead of being infantilised as is sometimes alleged, a Muslim woman was a financially independent being. This was observed and recorded to be the case of women of the eighteenth century who owned property. They would trade and invest, even making loans at interest [a totally un-Islamic function] to relatives and others.⁵⁴⁶ Similar independence is also generally enjoyed by women of tribal or rural societies all over the Muslim world, rather than by those in urban societies. This is, however, still not enough to ameliorate the alternate aspect which involves the deprivation of women's rights.

⁵⁴⁶Ahmed, 111.

MISOGYNY

As reality has fallen short of the Muslim ideal, with the passage of time this phenomenal Muslim woman has been the exception rather than the rule. The shortcomings that have manifested themselves in Muslim society have been the result of human failures in implementing the rules of the Qur'an. The basic reason for these deviations from Islamic rule has been the ignorance of both Muslim men and women of their Islamic rights. The men have erred because they have not been able to overcome the demands of cultural values, while the women have allowed themselves to be taken advantage of, as a result both of unquestioning acceptance of the cultural roles ascribed to them and of ignorance of the rights bestowed upon them by Islam.

CHASTISEMENT

With both the Qur'an and *hadith* tilting the balance so greatly in the favour of women, it is even more of an aberration that the other view has gained ascendance, even in Muslim intellectual society. This will be more clearly elaborated in the section which follows. The relevant Qur'anic *ayah* under discussion is:

And as for those women whose ill-will you have
reason to fear, admonish them [first]; then leave them
alone in bed; then beat them; and if thereon they
pay you heed, do not seek to harm them. Behold,
God is indeed most high, great! (4:34)

This *ayah* can be apparently misogynist if taken literally and in isolation, as Bosworth-Smith did in his expansive and knowledgeable study of Islam, but the elaboration of it by the Prophet and subsequent scholars clearly places it in

perspective. Detractors of Islam refer to it constantly, and conveniently overlook a clear-cut injunction in the Qur'an in which Job is advised to symbolically strike his wife with bunch of grass in order to fulfil an oath he made when she had blasphemed, as well as to avoid any violence against her person (38:44). Along with these Islamic protective specifications, general Muslim behaviour also indicates that a reading of physical abuse against women is inaccessible. This interpretation is also underscored by the fact that the Prophet interpreted the act as a symbolic gesture, and also set an example by treating all of his wives with kindness and consideration, even if differences developed with him. It is unfortunate that a contrary treatment of women exists eventhough mostly amongst illiterate and ignorant Muslims. The manifestation of totally non-Islamic behaviour would have been non-existent had Muslims practiced their true religion. It is also unfortunate to observe that there is no difference in the numbers of battered Muslim women when compared to those found among other cultures and religions.

The deplorable image of Muslim women formed by western writers is not improved by account of the Persian ambassador's shock at seeing the ease with which English women move on board a ship bound for home. He wished for the same freedom of movement for his countrywomen since travelling from one town to another was a great undertaking for Persian women.⁵⁴⁷ Another vivid description is given by Morier when he describes how one of the women of Top Beg's harem derides him in a fit of feminine ire and is immediately pounced upon

⁵⁴⁷Morier, Journey Through Persia 367.

by the eunuchs. Her cries of agony upon being beaten could be heard.⁵⁴⁸ It is this imagined or observed behaviour, which led western writers like Hamilton to collectively revile Muslims, in remarks such as these where Gul Begum's father defends his past conduct regarding her: "I am a Mohamedan and know what a woman's place is, and keep her in it".⁵⁴⁹ Or the Sheikh's predictable remark to the Englishwoman "If you were a woman of my own race....you would be for the eye of no other man than me. We teach our women obedience with a whip".⁵⁵⁰

POLYGyny

The Qur'anic dispensation for Muslims to have more than one wife, simultaneously with the injunction that there must be a maximum of four, has also aroused controversy in both societies. It is known that it was the practise of the Prophet and of his Companions who also had multiple wives. According to Islamic practise this dispensation was allowed as a measure to protect women's rights during the early years of Islam, as there were many Muslim women without a protector. Polygyny was intended to be the exception rather than the rule. Most of the Muslims have generally conformed to the requirements of the Qur'an, but with some exceptions. This compliance has come about because the prerequisite for indulging in this practise is sufficient wealth, as well as the demand for the execution of the practically impossible task of maintaining parity amongst the wives. The *ayahs* of the Qur'an pertaining to this situation are self explanatory :

⁵⁴⁸Morier, Misselmah 16.

⁵⁴⁹Hamilton, 82.

⁵⁵⁰Hull, 158.

....then marry from among [other] women such as are lawful to you - [even] two, or three or four: but if you have reason to fear that you might not be able to treat them with equal fairness, then [only] one - or [from among] those whom you rightfully possess.
(4:3)

These *ayahs* follow strictures regarding orphans in a man's care and enjoin the guardian to marry in order to facilitate the care of the minors. The concern for emotional well being in these *ayahs* was further contributed to by the example of the Prophet who had led a happy monogamous life with Khadija till he was widowed. After this he was to become "the secular chief of an important Muslim community" and married mostly to "strengthen political alliances". He was also to voice his preference for monogamy when he said "She is part of me, and what harms her harms me". This was said in protest against Ali's intention to take a second wife while married to Fatima the Prophet's youngest daughter.⁵⁵¹ Unfortunately a minority of Muslims were to continue the custom of polygyny to such an extent that it provided ample fuel for parody by people of other cultures.

Dickens in Sketches By Boz used this concept to add an amusing note to his account of the four Willis sisters who lived and did everything together. Great curiosity was aroused in the community around them about which one of the sisters was getting married. Someone even suggested that the suitor, Mr. Robinson, "was of Eastern descent, and contemplated marrying the whole family at once".⁵⁵² This idea was to be repeated in The Madras House by Granville Barker in a discussion about falling demographic statistics in England. Constantine advises a father of six daughters that he should either have drowned the girls at

⁵⁵¹Minai, 18,17.

birth, or found “one man ready for a small consideration to marry the lot”. Both the above writers unconsciously resonate the Islamic basis of polygyny, which was initially resorted to by the Muslims due to a dearth of men to provide for the increasing numbers of Muslim women. The fact that it was a continuation of tribal means for forging alliances was to encourage it till on occasion it was taken to the extreme. However interpretations of Qur’anic rulings specify that though a man may be entitled to four wives he must treat all of them equitably. Since the Qur’an also acknowledges that emotions of the heart are beyond man’s control then this parity is practically impossible. Therefore with monogamy the preferred and practical option, plurality of wives was less common among Muslims than was or is generally believed. However the general observable treatment of Muslim women was and is so deplorable that remarks like those recorded were reasonably warranted. The anomaly between Islamic rule and Muslim practice is also succinctly expressed by Grier in the Governess “They say that our rights are secured to us by law, but what we want is the sole right to our own husbands.” The women are even more anxious to have control of their own affairs.⁵⁵³

MALE CHAUVINISM

Although the treatment of women as some kind of inferior being is completely abhorrent to the values of Islam, it has been allowed to take root as a result of male chauvinism and female passivity. The following are the *ayahs* which

⁵⁵²Charles Dickens, Sketches by Boz 2 vols. (London: Chapman, 1910) 17.

⁵⁵³Grier, Governess 168.

are generally taken out of context to validate this male ascendancy. They are part of the regulations concerning divorce:

..the rights of the wives (with regard to their husbands are equal to the (husbands') rights with regard to them, although men have precedence over them (in this respect).(2:228)

The precedence in this respect refers to the husband having the deciding voice in a dispute between the two parties over the resumption of marital relationships as since it is the husband who is responsible for the maintenance of the family, the first option to rescind a provisional divorce rests with him.⁵⁵⁴

WITNESSES

These *ayahs*, along with those regarding the veil, those about the rights of inheritance and the ones regarding witnesses, have been erroneously utilised to perpetuate the image of masculine superiority. They were revealed during the instructions regarding financial matters which were to be witnessed as such:

.... And call upon two of your men to act as witnesses; and if two men are not available, then a man and two women from among such as are acceptable to you as witnesses, so that if the one should make a mistake, the other could remind her. And the witnesses must not refuse (to give evidence) whenever they are called upon.(2:282)

Generally this requirement for two women is taken out of context by both detractors of the Qur'an as well as by those who criticise women. They conveniently overlook the fact that, throughout the Qur'an, wherever there has been the mention of witnesses, in order to maintain justice it has always been specified that there should at least be TWO men. And, as specified in the above

verse, if the second man is not available then two women should be summoned, a single man's testimony is as invalid as is a single woman's. The practical reason for this was the pursuit of equitable justice; since women possessing the right to be maintained may not as a rule be familiar with legal and financial matters; the privilege of having support provided by a partner would contribute to her ability to give an authentic view, as would the testimonies of the two men who could corroborate each other. The adverse view has been propagated so prolifically that the five other instances in the Qur'an where witnesses are mentioned, without this stipulation regarding women, are ignored.

THE MUSLIM VEIL

The outcome of the aforementioned process in Muslim societies was that those *ayahs* of the Qur'an which concern the social aspects of women's position were deliberately manipulated to suit the male ego. These interpretations concern the Qur'anic *ayahs* regarding the veil and segregation of women. Most of the misunderstandings arise when the relevant *ayahs* are taken out of context by the uninformed. These *ayahs* are:

O Prophet! Tell thy wives and thy daughters, as well as all (other) believing women, that they should draw over themselves some of their outer garments (when in public): this will be more conducive to their being recognised (as decent women) and not annoyed. But (withal,) God is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace!(33:59)

This injunction was originally intended to prevent Muslim women from being harassed by those men hostile to them; who would do so only because of their

⁵⁵⁴Asad, see foot note 216: 50.

religion and, when confronted, would deny this and profess ignorance of the identity of the women. It would also be pertinent to keep in mind that in those days the Pagan women of Mecca used to go about in dresses that exposed their bosoms and that the outer cover could also be meant for covering this part of the anatomy in particular; this was subsequently mentioned in another revelation which will also be discussed below.⁵⁵⁵

Another pertinent revelation which has been taken to an extreme is that regarding the conduct of the general mass of the Muslim public, contemporaries of Muhammad. These were basically a simple people who had to have the fundamentals of etiquette explained to them. In *surah* 33:53 they were told not to enter the Prophet's house without being given leave to do so, and not to tarry too long while there. They were exhorted to speak to the Prophet's wives from behind a screen; which was necessitated by the Muslim men's habit of asking the wives to intercede with the Prophet on their behalf.

and (as for the Prophet's wives,) whenever you ask them for anything that you need, ask them from behind a screen: this will but deepen the purity of your hearts and theirs. Moreover, it does not behove you to give offence to God's Apostle - just as it would not behove you ever to marry his widows after he has passed away; that, verily, would be an enormity in the sight of God.(33:53)

In an explanatory note it is specified that this reference to a screen could be taken literally as well as metaphorically, and indicated 'the exceptional reverence due to these "mothers of the faithful"'.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁵Asad, see foot note 38: 539

⁵⁵⁶Asad, see footnote 69: 650.

To appreciate the necessity for the above *ayahs* it must be kept in mind that the Prophet's living quarters were part of the main Mosque, and were very simply structured. Thus it was easy to invade his privacy and, with the expansion of Islam, all manner of people were in the habit of visiting him in what was his place of worship, work and residence. Thus it was expedient but practical, to set some kind of a limit to access to his womenfolk, so as to have a semblance of order.⁵⁵⁷ By segregating his wives Muhammad created an appropriate distance between them and (now) an unambiguously patriarchal society. He presumably had the wealth to give his wives the servants necessary for their seclusion, "releasing them from tasks that" other female relatives performed. This conclusion is contrary to what is widely acknowledged, even by the Prophet's greatest critics, who believe that he had a most austere lifestyle even at the height of his power. This was disconcerting for his detractors who could not reconcile his austere habits to the profligate image of him which they wanted to create. He was known as a devoted husband to all of his wives, and as a man who helped them with their household duties and even mended his own ragged clothes and sandals. Ironically Muslim manhood chooses to overlook these widely known examples of behaviour practised by the Prophet.

Thus a comprehensive study of the background of the controversial religious factors renders it an aberration to misinterpret the differences of social roles, or of physical ability, as those of superiority or inferiority of the sexes.

⁵⁵⁷Muhammad Mazheruddin Siddiqi, Women in Islam, (Lahore: Culture, 1959) 171.

HAREM

MUSLIM BACKGROUND

One of the consequences of the segregation of women was the institution of the harem. Since it blended perfectly with the idea of male chauvinism and since it appealed to the women as a precursor or symbol of affluence it achieved widespread acceptance. The word harem has very different connotations for the people who use it and for those who are observers of it. It is more of a cultural effect, as is the veil, rather than a religious edict. However over the years the reasons for its institution blurred in the minds of the society and religious self-righteousness replaced it. The fusion of the issue of women with issues of class, culture, and politics and the encoding of the issue of women and the veil with these further issues have been critical for women.⁵⁵⁸

The word harem is interpreted as *zanana* in India and as *andarun* in Iran; and though usually associated with Muslim practices, "harems are known to have existed in the pre-Islamic civilizations of the Middle East". These words describe that part of the residence where the womenfolk of the household were relegated, and to which outsiders had limited access.⁵⁵⁹ The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam concurs with this, saying that the term also means women, and it clarifies the fact that in Turkey the harem is called the *haramlik* as opposed to the *salamlik*, the men's quarters.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁸Ahmed, 129.

⁵⁵⁹"Harem" Encyclopaedia Britannica 1995 ed.

⁵⁶⁰Glasse, see "Harim" 148.

More specifically both the veil and the harem were considered Byzantine influences, which were incorporated into their own culture by the conquering Muslims. However the seclusion of women was practiced even in Pagan Arabia and Fakihi the historian records the custom of parading unmarried daughters around the Kaabah for the purpose of attracting a suitor. When the girl was selected as a partner she resumed her veil once and for all.⁵⁶¹

Naila Minai confirms this and says that it was also customary for the aristocratic Pagan women of Mecca to be segregated into harems. This practice could have had a reverberating effect on later Muslim society. As wealth is a prerequisite for the establishment of a harem it is not surprising to note that it has always been an urban feature. Ibn Batuta, the Arab Marco Polo, visited a Turkish Sultanate in Anatolia in the mid-fourteenth century, and commented on the dignified position of the women. He said that there was no public segregation and that the Khatuns or Queens issued decrees jointly with the Sultans, and asked him statesmanlike questions when they received him in their private chambers.⁵⁶²

Muslim conquests began to lead to the creation of a leisured class, and women's co-operation soon became redundant for economic welfare. Feudalism also arose as a result of outside contacts. Eventually the harem developed, and percolated to the middle class, while the lower class remained unaffected.⁵⁶³

When Muslims established themselves in Turkey the rise in power and wealth of the Ottoman dynasty also led to the adoption of the old status symbols of

⁵⁶¹Bevan Jones, Woman in Islam (Lucknow: House, 1941) 27.

⁵⁶²Minai, 20,43.

⁵⁶³Siddiqi, 171.

the Byzantine, Persian and Arab societies, which included the harem along with the veil.⁵⁶⁴ The harem of the Ottomans was far from being the den of iniquity that the west imagined. It was unknown to the Ottoman empire at its height, when it was busy establishing itself and had little time to spare. It was associated with the decline of the empire, though this was not the sole reason for it. Even then the harem was run exactly by the mother of the sultan, with every member assigned specific duties. Even the sultan could go so far and no further as he had a successive array of authorities to contend with, although who included his mother, the Grand Vizier and the janissaries.⁵⁶⁵ There are no indigenous records of the Ottoman harem and there were very few eyewitness accounts of life inside. The only people who had access to it from the outside were physicians, repairmen and tuners of musical instruments like the piano and organ. The physicians were the only ones who had any contact with the women while the others could only provide descriptions of the building and furniture. Although details of life in the harem were not known, various official documents such as orders, permits, accounts and letters have provided information regarding its functions and organisations. Food and wardrobe expenses indicate the number of people present, while documents on salaries and appointments gave an idea of their hierarchy. The charities they were involved in reflected their character.⁵⁶⁶ The most powerful woman in the harem was the mother of the sultan who was followed in importance by his wives, favourites, odalisques, supervisors and finally the concubines.

⁵⁶⁴Minai, 44.

⁵⁶⁵N. M. Penzer, The Harem (London: Spring, 1967) 14.

⁵⁶⁶Sabahattin Turkoglu, The Topkapi Palace 15 ed. (Istanbul: Yayinlar, 1990) 93, 96.

As Naila Minai correctly reports: "The aristocratic harem in conjunction with the Islamic command of the necessity of knowledge, played an important role in the Muslim woman's education by freeing her from chores outside the house". Many educated noblewomen subsidised the education of young slave girls and princesses "by gathering the best scholars and artists in their salons".⁵⁶⁷ Even though this is a description of the blossoming of the Arab civilisation in the Middle Ages it could equally apply to the Ottoman period. It is to be observed, that, according to Ahmed, although Muslim, Christian and Jewish women (all veiled) attended the baths in Turkey, Egypt and Syria, western writers chose to ignore the fact that others were also veiled and concentrated only on Muslim women in their accounts.⁵⁶⁸ When Ahmed discusses the condition of women in the latter half of her book she extends it over a long period from the fifteenth century to the early nineteenth century and treats the whole expanse of Egypt, Turkey and Syria. Her sources are court records and European accounts and, curiously perhaps, tenth to thirteenth century Jewish documents (Cairo Geniza records) studied by S.D. Gotein who quotes liberally from the records.

In his Journey Through Persia Morier said that the royal harem at Teheran: "contains a female establishment as extensive as the public household. All the officers of the King's court are there represented by females". He then explained that the sultan's service both inside and outside the harem has the same etiquette and regularity as the exterior economy of his state. The sultan's mother controls all

⁵⁶⁷Minai, 34.

⁵⁶⁸Ahmed, 120.

the activities within the harem.⁵⁶⁹ James Morier gives a similar description of the Persian harem in which Mirza the Persian says that the women: "have the care of all the disbursements of the house", which they transact through a nazir who inter-relates to the male establishment, and is accountable to the woman as she pays him. Women have to be educated but only dance and sing at the weddings of their siblings. These arts are taught to slaves.

In Morier's description of the Persian harem it is represented as being similar to that found in Turkey and other countries, although Morier makes some distinction between the two, stating that Persian women are more strictly watched than those in the Turkish seraglio because, he says, the Prophet commented: "Keep watch over your religion and your women".⁵⁷⁰ Morier's reasons for the distinction are obscure as both groups basically believe in the same Prophet. But Morier repeats the same argument in Misselmah, when he says that Top Beg's own seraglio law: "in which he was strongly backed by Mahomet his prophet, was decisive in the extreme".⁵⁷¹

This account is not very different from that expressed in other western sources. In the Ottoman hierarchy the mother of the Sultan was at the apex, and was followed by the Sultan's daughters.⁵⁷² In the absence of the Sultan's mother the harem was ruled by the first wife, who was the only one on an equal footing in the Selmlik with her husband.⁵⁷³ Boys up to the age of ten or twelve were

⁵⁶⁹Morier, Journey Through Persia 39.

⁵⁷⁰Morier, Mirza 2:39.

⁵⁷¹Morier, Misselmah 15.

⁵⁷²Davis, 1.

⁵⁷³Pardoe, City of the Sultan 111.

admitted into harems freely. Sometimes male relations other than brothers and fathers were also allowed and these were called "*mahrem*". None of these could intrude upon a lady's privacy at will. If she were of high rank, even her husband could not enter her boudoir without sending to ask permission, something which was particularly true of the Turks.⁵⁷⁴

This account was confirmed in a letter dated 6 October 1858, written by Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe to the Earl of Malmesbury, telling him about the reforms in Turkey and saying: "The discipline of the harem has been so much relaxed since the death of the Sultan's mother" and noting that the number of its intimates was so exorbitant that the Sultan as superintendent would have difficulty in controlling it.⁵⁷⁵

Pardoe finds it amusing that an idea of impropriety is attached by Europeans, who have never visited the east, to the very name of a harem. This is negated by the great reverence displayed by the Turks to it for the harem remains inviolate even in times of popular disturbance or individual delinquency. The mob never intrudes on the women of its victim and the individual is never pursued once inside the harem.⁵⁷⁶

DEPICTIONS IN LITERATURE

The women of the harem are described by Beckford in Vathek as being "properly lubricated with the balm of Mecca".⁵⁷⁷ This balm is described by

⁵⁷⁴Murray, 2:15.

⁵⁷⁵Gillard, 18.

⁵⁷⁶Pardoe, Bosphorus 126.

⁵⁷⁷Beckford, 81.

Montagu as an ointment which was used for improving the complexion, something to which she reacted with a swollen and red face. It was also not easily available.⁵⁷⁸

It was this image of the state of Muslim women which passed into the mind of foreign visitors, and it is not surprising if their image is similar to that of Edward Lear whose graphic illustration was made before his travels to the east.

There was an Old Man on some rocks,
Who shut his wife up in a box,
When she said, 'Let me out', he exclaimed, 'Without
doubt,
You will pass all your life in that box.' ⁵⁷⁹

Lear's image must have been reinforced after he saw the state of women during his travels abroad. Byron's view of the plight of the women in the harem was quite similar to this when he describes it in Beppo:

They lock them up, and veil, and guard them daily,
They scarcely can behold their male relations
....Their days are either passed in doing nothing,
Or bathing, nursing, making love, and clothing. ⁵⁸⁰

This is again in sharp contrast with another general western image which Byron repeats in Beppo. After mentioning the names of other writers on the subject, including Scott and Moore, he says:

The poor dear Mussulwomen whom I mention,
have none of these instructive pleasant people,
and one would seem to them a new invention,
Unknown as bells within a Turkish steeple.

In the same poem Byron gives another interesting description of the inmates of the harem, although this is again at variance with the actual situation :

⁵⁷⁸Montagu, 2:288.

⁵⁷⁹Christopher Ricks, The New Oxford Book of Victorian Verse (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987) 217.
Henceforth Victorian.

⁵⁸⁰Byron, 289.

They cannot read, and so don't lisp in criticism;
Nor write, and so they don't affect the muse;
In harems learning soon would make a pretty schism,
But luckily these beauties are no 'Blues'.⁵⁸¹

Other writers contributed to this picture of the luxurious harem. Edward Granville Browne, in his only remark about the women, chose to mention the Nigaristan palace, and the marble bath with its glissoire, down which the ladies of the harem used to slide into the arms of their lord.⁵⁸²

In contrast to these imaginative portrayals, more accurate accounts were provided by those writers who had some knowledge about feminine Muslim society.

A British woman who had access to the Turkish harems held views which are similar to indigenous descriptions. Mary Wortley Montagu, the Ambassador's wife in Istanbul, visited the harem of the grand vizier of the Ottoman Sultan which she found to be very plain, as the couple were devoted to charity and prayer. She thought his deputy's house was more ornate and that the dancing of the slaves there was better. She also visited the widow of the deposed sultan, who discredited the stories which circulated of the sultan dropping his handkerchief before the chosen candidate for the night and of her subsequently crawling up the royal bed. However, Montagu's account of the Seraglio was at times considered suspect as no foreigner was allowed there, but she was always careful to claim only that "I have taken care to see as much of the Seraglio as is to be seen".⁵⁸³ Montagu also wrote that the Turkish women's enlightened approach to health care

⁵⁸¹Byron, 289.

⁵⁸²E. G. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (London, Century, 1984)105.

⁵⁸³Montagu, 2:239,307,327.

was in sharp contrast to that "borne fatalistically by European women". They resumed normal activity shortly after childbirth, and accepted vaccination against smallpox, seventy years earlier than their British counterparts.⁵⁸⁴ Morier and Montagu agree with Pardoe (Bosphorus,127) who describes the activities of Turkish ladies as : "the most free in the world as they move about freely incognito, and enjoy simple pleasures like visiting, baths, festivals and are financially independent". According to Thackeray, Montagu gave the last good account of a Turkish bath. He then gives a very comic account of how he was terrorised and made to leave the public bath because of its rigorous rituals.⁵⁸⁵ Most writers who did not have even Montagu's opportunities of observing harems, provided reasonably accurate accounts. The typically urbane Disraeli has a more balanced concept of the harem when he says it included: "a group of women that the drawing-rooms of Europe and the hareems of Asia could perhaps not have rivalled".⁵⁸⁶ In Jane Eyre there are descriptions of gossiping turban-clad ladies a description which could have a double edged entendre, as it is equally descriptive of fashionable salons in eighteenth century England as of ladies in the eastern world. Brontë even describes the heroine Jane sitting cross legged as a Turk, an image loaded with meaning. Kinglake says that the rooms of his Turkish friend's hareem were like that of an English nursery and he comments on how the Muslims imprison beauty and enforce a stern and gloomy morality.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁴Montagu, 1:45, 46.

⁵⁸⁵Thackeray, Cornhill to Cairo 104.

⁵⁸⁶Minai, 43.

⁵⁸⁷Kinglake, 157, 131.

This corresponds to Snouck Hurgronje's (1931) explanation when he says that European readers imagine the harem, the back part of a Muslim's house, as a kind of prison, in which wives and slaves serve his caprice and from which they infrequently creep out closely veiled. He says these false conceptions are confirmed by travel books, and that it is just this intimate part of the whole that is always closed to travellers. They get their information from unrefined circles which give them strange ideas "and what they do not hear makes them believe that Muslims keep these things extraordinarily secret".⁵⁸⁸ This could also be said of the Ottoman harem. These images were identical to those painted by Orientalist artists, who, deprived of first hand observation, resorted to the use of their fancy, amply stocked by the Arabian Nights.

Snouck Hurgronje, a Dutchman who became a Muslim and claimed to have lived in Mecca during the nineteenth century, observed that the harem means the womenfolk of the house and that a special part of the house is not always reserved for them. Since their temporary whereabouts are unknown a visitor must always take a man of the house as a guide, but these restrictions are not too strict. During the annual pilgrimage, Hajj, Meccans let out portions of their houses. Visitors to the upper stories must be escorted or observe propriety by calling out "Ya Sattar" so that the women can get out of the way.⁵⁸⁹ He says that rich merchants and high officials always kept the women separate and only talk about them with their intimates. A middle class man may draw his wife into conversation with a friend with or without a partition between her and them. Hurgronje correctly concludes

⁵⁸⁸Snouck Hurgronje, trans J. H. Monahan. Mekka (Leyden: Brill, 1931) 83.

that this evidence disproves the commonly held view. This opinion is that segregation is a consequence of the fear of temptation leading to an exchange of partners, because of the facility of divorce provided by Islam. Then there is the difference in the behaviour of the lower classes, who have more free interaction between the sexes, simply because of lack of the financial resources which are necessary for practising segregation. Hurgronje's deductions are in harmony with the general Muslim opinion regarding the harem as explained in the earlier paragraphs of this chapter.⁵⁹⁰ There were other writers apart from Hurgronje who agreed with indigenous commentators.

Similar conditions existed on the other side of the Muslim world. Bernier in his *Travels* shows the power of women within the harem in his account of the Mughal princesses: The Mughal King Aurangzeb's council discussed the fate of Dara (his elder brother from whom he had usurped the throne). Some wanted imprisonment but Roshan Ara Begum, his sister, together with other enemies of Dara, urged his assassination,⁵⁹¹ a view which eventually prevailed and he was finally executed. Before this, when Aurangzeb was struggling to gain power, he captured the King of Golconda's palace. He "sent the women to the King, according to a custom most scrupulously observed among Eastern despots".⁵⁹² Emperor Shahjehan his father, under the influence of Dara and Roshan Ara Begum, who thought Aurangzeb would become too powerful, ordered him to relinquish Golconda. The daughter had complete control over her father and after his death

⁵⁸⁹Hurgronje, 83, 34.

⁵⁹⁰Hurgronje, 85.

⁵⁹¹Bernier, 100.

she received her brother Aurangzeb with singular honour and presented him with a golden basin full of her jewels. In return he forgave and treated her liberally. In general, the observations of western writers have resulted in reports, which are at variance with indigenous descriptions, and tell a very different story.

WOMEN SLAVES

It is appropriate to discuss the much debated issue of slavery in the Islamic world here, as it was the position of the women slaves which aroused most concern among western writers. Surprisingly little mention is made of the male slaves. Their absence from the harem may be a primary reason for this lapse or perhaps the fact that they rose to form ruling classes and so did not fit the generally accepted image of slavery. The only occasion on which male slaves are mentioned is when they are known to have founded a dynasty as is the case with the Mamluks and when they become kings, as did Iltumish in India. Such a change of status seems to have occurred with surprising regularity. In contrast to the paucity of reports about male slaves, there is a plethora of images about the female ones. Since wives, concubines and female slaves intermingled in the western imagination as they did in real life, even though they came from quite different backgrounds, it is advisable to include them in the same chapter as they would all have been found in a single harem.

Slavery is clearly an abomination in Islam and the Qur'an has repeatedly exhorted against it short of abruptly putting an end to it. In actual fact it was gradually phased out so that its ending did not disrupt the economic welfare of the

⁵⁹²Bernier, 21.

societies where it was practiced, nor to immediately render the slaves destitute. The Qur'anic injunctions were asserted on different occasions. A slave was to be manumitted in order to expiate for misdeeds stretching from the slightest of misdemeanours to the most culpable of crimes. The punishment for restoring conjugal relations with a wife, breaking an oath or killing someone was in each case redeemed by setting a slave free. Manumission was preferable for attaining paradise but, if it were not feasible, then the slave had to be treated as one of the family, only then would there be salvation. Marrying one's slave, whether male or female, was also recommended. This proved an effective method and now the category of slave has to be defined as someone suffering from the bondage of great debt or poverty. The Qur'anic *ayahs* are:

..... truly pious is he who.... spends his substance - however much he may himself may cherish it - upon his near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and the beggars, and for the freeing of human beings from bondage:(2:177)

- And upon him who has slain a believer by mistake there is the duty of freeing a believing soul from bondage - (4:92)

Thus, the breaking of an oath must be atoned for by

.....freeing a human being from bondage; (5:89)

And {you ought to} marry the single from among you as well as such of your male and female slaves as are fit [for marriage] (24:32)

....as for those who would separate from their wives by saying "Thou art as unlawful to me as my mother", and thereafter would go back on what they have said, [their atonement] shall be the freeing of a human being from bondage before the couple may touch one another again.(58:3)

Muslims found loopholes around these injunctions without much difficulty and continued with the reprehensible practice of slavery, albeit tempered by Qur'anic

teachings. They were able to establish a balance between their conscience and worldly demands for quite a long time. However the will of the Qur'an was to prevail and the unacceptable practice was eventually to be eradicated. The right to safeguard human freedom, being one of the foremost duties of Islamic law, helped to alleviate some of the horrors associated with such an offensive practice, and at times reality was quite different from the state of affairs which was generally imagined to be prevalent.

Muslim chauvinist interpretations excluded women slave owners from availing of the sexual services of their male slaves, and therefore there is an absence of adult males and consequent problems in the harems. However they were not so circumspect regarding the privileges of the men who owned female slaves. This led to numerous examples of the use and abuses of female slaves which is recorded in very early Muslim history. This consequently found expression in the works of western writers as well.

Although this malpractice was resorted to much before the Ottomans, it was they who were the main focus for study amongst nineteenth century English writers. A rare indigenous survey of the Ottoman harem reveals that, when the concubines, who were mostly Circassian, arrived at the Ottoman harem they were given a medical examination and were grouped according to beauty and talent. The beautiful ones were assigned for the service of the Sultan and the others were trained to serve in different capacities at the harem. Each one was educated differently and their education was in the hands of the experienced concubines. These women were separated into three groups, recruits, supervisors and

assistants. Excepting the odalisques all of these received satisfactory salaries and after a certain period of time all could leave the Palace. Some were married to high-ranking officials and their wedding expenses were borne by the Palace. The supervisor and assistant concubines could leave the palace and after nine years of service could seek the Sultan's permission and get married. The Sultan could spend the night with any one of them yet, since there were many concubines who refused to do so, he clearly did not have unlimited control. That Abdulhamit I and Abdulhamit II were turned down by quite a few concubines is evidenced from documents. If a woman spent even one night with the Sultan she became a privy Odalisque and was given a private apartment with concubines of her own. If she bore a child to the Sultan she became a wife if he desired and if she was the only one to have a son then she became the First Woman and eventually a *Valide* Sultan.⁵⁹³

MISCONCEPTIONS

Thus apart from the occasional lapses by some Muslims the situation in respect of slaves was quite different from that which western writers depicted. They described it only in the mythic idiom most familiar to them. As Walter Scott says in Roderick:

Then rose the grated Harem, to enclose
The loveliest maidens of the Christian line;
Then, menials, to their misbelieving foes.⁵⁹⁴

However Pardoe adds an opposing description to this in City Of The Sultan when she says the slaves of an Osmanli are so well treated that: “.....almost all the youth

⁵⁹³Turkoglu, 106.

of both sexes in Circassia insist upon being conveyed by their parents to Constantinople, where the road to honour and advancement is open to everyone".

Pardoe states that: "The fables which have been both written and painted" on the subject of the "slave - market of Constantinople, with a tenacity of error perfectly extraordinary, have tended to excite in Europe a feeling of horror and disgust, totally uncalled for by the aspect of the place itself"...."if the creators of these flimsy prettinesses were to reflect for a moment that they are not only violating good taste in their own persons, but, moreover libelling a whole people, and distorting truth at the same time, they would consent to sacrifice a sentence, or to dispense with an effect, in order to be at once more decent, more veracious, more just". Pardoe continues "... only those who look superficially at the East, - the travellers against time, who make deduction serve for experience, and inference for fact, - who fall into such gross errors as these;" not one of those who spread the fallacy which we are now deprecating, ever witnessed" the spectacle of their fancy.⁵⁹⁵ Although slaves were marketed in the open and there are indigenous accounts of this behaviour which was also depicted by some of these Orientalists, the practice had petered out by the nineteenth century, unlike the reprehensible custom of selling wives which still existed in England as portrayed in Thomas Hardy's novel The Mayor of Casterbridge. Pardoe writes that a dissatisfied Turkish slave could ask to be sold and that if this happened repeatedly then his or her master was legally obliged to comply. The slave could even select the

⁵⁹⁴Scott, 597.

⁵⁹⁵Pardoe, City of the Sultan 104, 127,128.

purchaser and at times "entailed considerable loss on his master".⁵⁹⁶ When he visited a slave market Kinglake heard a slave woman loudly refuse to be bought by him as an "infidel".⁵⁹⁷ Lucy Garnett says of the Osmanli women that "Slavery, as now practised in Turkey, is in direct contravention of the law of Islam", but it exists because the system of the harem is based on it. She also noted that slaves at great houses are trained and educated with great care from around the age of nine. They become accomplished in dance, song and embroidery among other talents.⁵⁹⁸ Thackeray describes a scene at a Cairo slave market: "They are not unhappy: they look to being bought, as many a spinster looks to an establishment in England". Once chosen they were kindly treated and well clothed. They fattened and were the merriest in the community.⁵⁹⁹

An item in Household Words entitled "Brides For Sale" commented that: On the move to abolish slavery in Egypt : It should be phased out gradually as the society was constructed round the system. Those who could not afford a wife from among their own people would turn to the slave market. "The Orientals do not buy odalisques, but housewives" and the victims are very willing parties in most cases.⁶⁰⁰

Hurgronje in Mekka has a similar description of the slave markets in Mecca: He says that in the slave market no one could be sold to an owner against their will, and that they could compel the owner to resell them and could do so

⁵⁹⁶Pardoe, City of the Sultan 105.

⁵⁹⁷Kinglake, 167.

⁵⁹⁸Montagu, 2:286.

⁵⁹⁹Thackeray, Cornhill to Cairo 280.

⁶⁰⁰Household Words vol.12 no.281 (Aug.1855): 42.

even without leave. The atmosphere at these markets was also generally relaxed. It would be mistaken to consider their lives as idyllic, but it is only formally different from that of European servants and workmen. Abolishing the system would mean a social revolution for Arabia. The punishment of offspring and slaves is identical and is entirely against modern ideas. A wealthy Meccan recalls being beaten by his father for being rude to his slave. He had to apologise and after this was always polite to servants.⁶⁰¹ Tribal warfare in Africa had provided Christian and Muslim slave traders with easy targets. The Christian slave traders acted as agents of some power or for money and killed the rebels. They never incorporated these people, rather they used them as instruments. The Muslim slave traders, who were free agents and would convert those they could, consequently set up clean villages for them. Those who refused were transported and eventually were also incorporated into the Meccan world, refusing to return. They were an important feature of trade practices and made a contribution to Meccan society. The allotted work was not too heavy, and food, clothing and lodging is provided according to their wishes. Generally they preferred to remain in tutelage, especially if the master gave them permission to marry. Male house slaves were given independence at the age of twenty, in order to avoid contact with the females in the household and because the giving of freedom was regarded as meritorious.⁶⁰²

There is a great controversy regarding the issue of slavery, so often invoked in criticism of Islam. It is true that Islam did not categorically ban slavery

⁶⁰¹Hurgronje, 15, 17, 16.

but the strictures placed on it regarding the treatment of slaves and their rights did much to neutralise it. Added to this are the constant recommendations for manumitting slaves as forms of expiation and as a means of earning favour in the hereafter. These indirect directives were sufficient guides as they underlined the favoured option. As usual Muslim men tried their best to circumvent those rules, which were not convenient to them. Over the centuries male chauvinism succeeded in hamstringing Islamic rules regarding the sexual abuse of female slaves and extended it to include maidservants. As a result Muslim society lived with this form of institutionalised prostitution within the home, ignoring it even when it stared them in the face. Although this problem is fading out it has yet to be made obsolete. It had its parallels in nineteenth century western society where similar practices had culminated in an "upstairs" and "downstairs" division of society.

GENDER INTERACTION

As noted above, the misinterpretation of the Qur'anic *ayahs* regarding the etiquette between men and women, resulted in an abundance of images like those expressed by Morier in Hajji Baba of Ispahan. Here Zeenab, the Kurdish beauty, refuses to unveil:

"....You know it is a crime for a woman to let her face be seen; and you are neither my father, my brother, nor my husband; I do not know who you are" ⁶⁰³

In Zohrab The Hostage Morier has Fattah Ali ask his uncle, the villainous Shah, to allow him to meet his sister, as by doing so he "neither transgresses against the

⁶⁰²Hurgronje, 7-19.

⁶⁰³Morier, Hajji Baba 93.

ordinances of the Prophet, or the usages of the strictest sons of Islam". Since she was "the Banou, the chief of my Anderoon" the Shah only allows him to do so from behind a curtain and in the presence of a eunuch.⁶⁰⁴ In Ayesha the same idea is put forward by James Morier when Ayesha refuses to unveil before the Captain Pasha and says: "There is no man, according to our law, save the sultan himself, who can force me to show my face to himand unless I am compelled by force, I will not see the Captain pasha, or any other man" Morier adds the concept of shrinking from an infidel to similar statements when Ayesha denies that she has spoken to Osmond the Englishman: "I saw him for a moment - but speak to him? no. Am I not a maid of Islam? Are we not taught to shun heretics?" When Osmond surprises Ayesha and her mother on the terrace Ayesha's Mahomedan education would have taught her to fly "from an infidel".⁶⁰⁵

In a similar way Byron's Zuleika in "The Bride of Abydos" believes that:

To meet the gaze of stranger's eyes,
Our law, our creed, our God denies;
Nor shall one wandering thought of mine
At such, our Prophet will repine.⁶⁰⁶

This was echoed years later by James Elroy Flecker in his play Hassan. Here when Yasmin roguishly refuses Hassan's request to unveil with: "....And since when do the daughters of Islam unveil before strangers?" In the same play the veiled Parvaneh is brought into the presence of the Caliph who tells her: "It is written in

⁶⁰⁴Morier, Zohrab 53.

⁶⁰⁵Morier, Ayesha , 344, 50, 59

⁶⁰⁶Byron, 180.

Sacred Law: In the king's presence a woman may unveil, without fear of censure".⁶⁰⁷

Sydney Grier, in Like Another Helen, writes about a spy who tracks a slave-merchant, Sinzaun, who is supposed to be holding hostage a missing Englishwoman and talks with her through a curtain with great respect.⁶⁰⁸ In Grier's The Governess, Lady Haig explains the routine of the harem at Baghdad to Cecil, the uninitiated governess, telling her how well the head Kalfa (upper slave) will look after her. She tells Cecil always to wear a white sheet over her European clothes whenever she goes out, and to cover her face whenever *dastur* is called. She could feel safe as not even the "Pasha dare put his nose in without your consent".⁶⁰⁹

Sherer in The Princess puts forward a different view, and one which is more representative of Islamic practice. George contemplates his Muslim wife's insistence on retaining the veil and decides that she could "emancipate herself from usages which had nothing really to do with her religion".⁶¹⁰

Thus, keeping in view the few examples of excesses which can be relegated to individual caprices, it can safely be asserted that the behaviour of Muslim women as depicted is almost as far from reality as it is possible to be. As Hurgonje says, these practices are not "Moslim law" yet it has to be stated that

⁶⁰⁷James Elroy Flecker, Hassan (London: Heinemann, 1923) 16.

⁶⁰⁸Sydney Grier, Like Another Helen (London: Blackwood, 1899) 350.

⁶⁰⁹Grier, The Governess 92.

⁶¹⁰Sherer, 15.

they are followed in the towns where Muslim culture prevails.⁶¹¹ It would be pertinent here to consider the actual *ayahs* which will clarify the matter;

TELL the believing men to lower their gaze and to be mindful of their chastity: this will be most conducive to their purity - (and,) verily, God is aware of all that they do. (31) And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and to be mindful of their chastity, and not to display their charms (in public) beyond what may (decently) be apparent thereof; hence, let them draw their head- coverings over their bosoms. And let them not display (more of) their charms to any but their husbands, or their fathers, or their husbands' fathers, or their sons, or their husband's sons, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women folk, or those whom they rightfully possess, or such male attendants as are beyond all sexual desire, or children that are as yet unaware of women's nakedness; and let them not swing their legs (in walking) so as to draw attention to their hidden charms. And (always), O you believers - all of you - turn unto God in repentance, so that you might attain to a happy state! (24:30-31)

Comparing the various literary statements previously quoted with these *ayahs* the following deduction may be made: that there seems to be no special privilege accorded to the Caliph simply for holding his office. There was a harem etiquette where the Sultan could not enter even his mother's room, if he saw the slippers of a female guest outside the doorstep. If he were to do otherwise it would be a liberty that would be resented by every woman in the Ottoman empire. There was to be no entry if a female visitor's slippers were seen outside, and an announcement by a slave was to be made if there were female houseguests. A Turk always had his approach announced, in order to give an opportunity to withdraw for those who

⁶¹¹Hurgronje, 83.

wish to do so.⁶¹² And the Sultan Osman III was rumoured to wear shoes with large headed nails in the soles while walking in the harem so that the women knew he was coming and could hide.⁶¹³ If he were to possess the putative rights mentioned above then he need not have observed such proprieties. However, this misplaced idea about the sense of the Caliph or Sultan's superiority, even in the minds of uninformed Muslims, is one which is greatly exploited by unscrupulous so called holy men.

However, since Islam is a practical religion, and as these *ayahs* can be interpreted in a variety of ways, it requires great discretion not to lose the main message of decency in the pursuit of literal interpretations. Such a pursuit is mistaken, but highly prevalent among the uninformed observers.

THE LOOK

The discussion of the look, or gaze has a very important place in the metaphysical interpretation of the term as expressed in the Qur'an. It would suffice to say that it is not interpreted as is generally believed.

Abdelwahab Bouhdiba explains, in reference to Sartre's phrase of: The 'upsurge of the other's look', that it has been clearly felt by Islam, that one may speak quite literally of a subtle dialectic of the encounter of the sexes, through the exchange of looks. How to look and how to be looked at are the object of a precise, meticulous apprenticeship that is an integral part of the socialisation of the Muslim. To be a Muslim is to control one's gaze and to know how to protect one's own

⁶¹²Pardoe, Bosphorus 126.

⁶¹³Turkoglu, 106.

intimacy from that of others.⁶¹⁴ Apart from this, the exchange of looks between the sexes forms a major part of the Qur'anic *ayahs* regarding the companions to be found in paradise, as will become relevant in the discussion about *houris*.

Surprisingly, Victorian interaction between the sexes was not dissimilar to these Islamic stipulations of behaviour, which Muslim society adopted and continues to apply without modification. At times this modesty, when displayed by a Muslim, is misinterpreted as a manifestation of unreliability. As the Muslim was also generally regarded a barbarian he was conveniently used to depict lasciviousness. Byron unintentionally points to this dialectic in Beppo when he notes:

Our Laura's Turk still kept his eyes upon her,
Less in the Mussulman than Christian way,
Which seems to say, "Madam, I do you honour,
And while I please to stare, you'll please to stay".⁶¹⁵

Beppo is set in a Venetian carnival at which a lady is surprised in the company of an admirer by the appearance of her long missing husband, Beppo, dressed in Turkish garb. The potentially explosive situation is, however, resolved amicably. In Jane Eyre, Brontë gives a description of Rochester looking at Jane as a Sultan looks at his bedecked slave⁶¹⁶, quite in contravention of the Islamic stipulation described above.

⁶¹⁴Abdelwahab Bouhdiba, Sexuality in Islam (London: Routledge, 1985) 37.

⁶¹⁵Byron, 289.

⁶¹⁶Brontë, 268.

THE *HOURI*

The concept of the *houri* has evoked the strongest response in the imagination of those not fully conversant with the true nature of these literary figures, or of the disposal of Muslim wives in the hereafter.

All of the quotations collected below represent confused thinking, resulting either from literal interpretation, or from ignorance of the essence of the Qur'anic message.

Before discussing the nature of the pleasures of heaven from the Muslim perspective, it would be relevant to keep in mind the following exhortation of the Qur'an:

(17) And (as for all such believers,) no human being can imagine what blissful delights, as yet hidden, await them (in the life to come as) as a reward for all that they did.(32:17)

Despite this limitation on the capability of the imagination, there is no dearth of descriptions by the Muslim. These, like non-Muslim sources, stretch from literal acceptance of the words of the Qur'an, to the more subtle interpretations put forward by the scholars.

The *houri* are described by The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam as: The female companions, perpetual virgins, of the saved in paradise. They are the symbols of spiritual states of rapture.⁶¹⁷

The following is a verse from the Qur'an mentioning the presence of the *houri*:

(22) and with them will be their companions pure,
most beautiful of eye, (23) like unto pearls (still)
hidden in their shells.(56:22)

⁶¹⁷Glasse, see "Houris" 160.

Usmani contends that the term *houri* has been appropriated by Muslims to denote femininity while it is actually used for companions of either sex.⁶¹⁸ Asad explains that he has rendered the term *hur* which is the plural of both the masculine and feminine, as "companions pure". The term primarily denotes "intense whiteness of the eyeballs and lustrous black of the iris", generally it refers to whiteness, and, as a moral qualification, to "purity". Asad elaborates on the term "beautiful of eye" as referring to the beauty of the soul, being reflected more clearly through the eyes than through any other part of the human body. He says that the current feminine connotation also signifies nothing more nor less than righteous women.⁶¹⁹

Asad chronologically traces the origin of the references to heavenly 'spouses' in the Qur'an. The earliest of these allegorical references to the delights of paradise is:

(49) Let (all) this be a reminder (to those who believe in God) - for verily, the most beautiful of all goals awaits the God-conscious: (50) gardens of perpetual bliss, with gates wide-open to them, (51) wherein they will recline, (and) wherein they may (freely) call for many a fruit and drink, (52) having beside them well-matched mates of modest gaze. (38:49)

He explains the latter *ayah* as an allegorical phrase which alludes to the excellence of the righteous of both sexes "who in the life to come will be rejoined with those whom they loved and by whom they were loved in this world".⁶²⁰ They will be "well-matched" not only in age but in quality of excellence or attraction for each

⁶¹⁸ Maulana Usmani, *Fiqh ul Quran* 7 vols. (Karachi: Thought, 1986)3: 133.

⁶¹⁹ Asad, foot-note 8: 831.

⁶²⁰ Asad, foot-note 46: 701.

other.⁶²¹ The concept of the 'modest gaze', when used in respect of the disposal of wives in the next world, is answered by the following *ayahs*:

(34) And (with them will be their) spouses, raised high: (35) for, behold, We shall have brought them into being in a life renewed, (36) having resurrected them as virgins, (37) full of love, well-matched (38) with those who have attained to righteousness: (39) a good many of olden times, (40) and a good many of later times.(56:34-40)

According to Asad 'There is no doubt that the "spouses raised high" - i.e. , to the status of the blest are identical with the hur mentioned' in previous *ayahs*. *Hur* being this rendering of the word *hourī*.⁶²²

Simon Ockley also includes the *hourī* in his The History of The Saracens, when he describes Jonas, a Greek convert, consoling himself after the fall of Damascus, with the thought of a *hourī* as a wife in paradise. He has discovered that his old love has committed suicide in reaction to his betrayal of her faith.⁶²³

William Beckford in Vathek explains the nature of *houris* in a note saying that they are so called because of their large black eyes. Unlike women, they are not formed of clay, nor do they suffer from the same afflictions. Intercourse with these virgins is to constitute the principal felicity of the faithful.⁶²⁴ In Walter Scott's The Talisman the Saracen explains to the Crusader that the patriarchal privileges of Abraham and Solomon assigned to his people by the Prophet are: "having given us

⁶²¹Asad, foot-note 15: 832.

⁶²²Asad, foot-note 13: 832.

⁶²³Ockley, 1:153.

⁶²⁴Beckford, 181.

here a succession of beauty at our pleasure, and beyond the grave the black-eyed houris of Paradise".⁶²⁵

Morier in Misselmah compares the new favourite of Top Beg's harem to a *houri*, a rose and a moon⁶²⁶ and Byron also uses the imagery of the *houri* in his Don Juan:

When Julia sate within as pretty a bower
As e'er held houri in that heathenish heaven
Described by Mahomet, and Anacreon Moore.⁶²⁷

All of the adjectives (used with the term *houri* in these quotations) are among those generally used in the east to denote beauty. A generation later Arthur Clough states in an intriguing passage that:

.... Allah is great, no doubt, and Juxtaposition his prophet.
Ah, but the women, alas! they don't look at it in that way
That she is but for a space, an ad-interim solace and pleasure,
That in the end she shall yield to a perfect and absolute something,
Which I then for myself shall behold, and not another,
Which, amid fondest endearments, meantime I forget not, forsake
not.⁶²⁸

Brontë also gives an imagined description of the Grand Turk's seraglio, populated with gazelle eyed *houris*, in Jane Eyre.⁶²⁹

Among other writers to take up the subject is William Muir who tells his readers that Muhammad mentioned the *houri* when he had only one wife.⁶³⁰ More in accordance with Muslim details, Taylor, in Tippoo, even gives them a definite number while recounting the beauty of his beloved: "this, one of the seventy Houris, whom the Prophet (may his name be honoured!) has promised to the lot

⁶²⁵Scott, Talisman 20.

⁶²⁶Morier, Misselmah 13.

⁶²⁷Byron, 299.

⁶²⁸Ricks, Victorian 249.

⁶²⁹Brontë, 269.

of every true believer who doeth his law".⁶³¹ Robert Osborn also introduces the idea of "Youths endowed with immortal beauty serving wine and the wives of the faithful, reclining on soft green cushions", while houris are also present.⁶³²

These fantasies were to continue into the early part of the twentieth century, when Flecker in Hassan added to the elusive *houris* as the "dancing women worthy of Paradise".⁶³³

CONCLUSION

There is an existing confusion concerning the state of Muslim women, whether real or ethereal, on both sides of the divide. Although of more recent origin, the vast diversification which exists between informed and un-informed perceivers of Islamic injunctions is symptomatic of the general malaise that exists regarding the rest of Islamic beliefs. It is particularly noticeable with reference to the concepts concerning women, where the obvious manifestations of chauvinist Muslim behaviour led to the conclusion that Islam is anti-feminist. This deduction could be regarded as illusory as the disputed nature of the *houri*. The fact that, like that of the imaginary *houri*, the idea persists, can be attributed to the disregard of the essence of the words of the Qur'an, and to an excessive observance of man-made dogma which developed after the death of the Prophet. Unfortunately Muslim society has been functioning or rather dysfunctioning on these faulty premises, which have even increased, and the irony is that Muslim and European

⁶³⁰Muir, 74.

⁶³¹Meadows Taylor, Tippoo Sultaun; A Tale of the Mysore War 3 vols. (London: Bentley, 1840)1: 55.

⁶³²Osborn, 32.

theories come to the same conclusion - the woman is destructive to the social order: for Imam Ghazali, because she is active; for Freud, because she is not.⁶³⁴

Fatima Mernissi does not need to wonder if a desegregated society, where formerly secluded women would have equal rights, not only economically but sexually, would be an authentic Muslim society.⁶³⁵ The society described by her would be a return to original Islamic society in which, apart from separate areas for prayer in the mosque, there was no public segregation. This desegregation was indeed the reason why the Qur'an instituted the rules of decency in behaviour and dress.⁶³⁶

Women in early Islam were contemporaries of Muhammad and of the succeeding generations and were regarded as important sources of traditions. A few of them taught the teachers of Ibn Sad and ^{Imam} Hambal.⁶³⁷ Eventually the influx of wealth caused problems involving lax sexual morality, so that the second Caliph Umar instituted the segregation of women in mosques. He could not totally abolish their rights to attend mosques since the Prophet had insisted on the presence of women at Eid congregations.⁶³⁸ In spite of the institutionalisation of the marginalisation of women in Muslim society, Islam had incorporated their rights so clearly that Bhamidipati Swaramayya concludes, from a study of the rights of inheritance of four communities, that Muhammad elevated women to a

⁶³³Flecker, 38.

⁶³⁴Fatima Mernissi, Beyond the veil: male-female dynamics in modern Muslim society rev. ed. (London: Al-Saqi, 1985) 13.

⁶³⁵Mernissi, introduction viii.

⁶³⁶Siddiqi, 170.

⁶³⁷Stern, 22.

⁶³⁸Siddiqi, 169, 170.

superior position in social equality and, judged from the standpoint of rights of succession, they enjoyed the best social status in any patriarchal society of those times.⁶³⁹

This deduction can only be appreciated when they are compared to women in other cultures. For example British women struggled for their rights and only in 1872 were married women allowed to acquire, hold and dispose by will or otherwise any real or personal property, and enter contract and trade. In 1894 qualified women were allowed to vote for District and Parish Councils. Hindu women have enjoyed this since Manu or before the Christian Era.⁶⁴⁰ It could be said of Muslim women, as of Hindu women, that unfortunately both these societies succumbed to cultural values and surrendered their rights, while the British gained theirs. The western feminist battle for having housework considered as a full time job was won by Islam for Muslim women centuries ago as, according to strict Islamic injunctions, it is not obligatory for a woman to cook food, or wash clothes for her husband or children, or even suckle the infants. She may refuse these without grounds of legal complaint against her.⁶⁴¹ Due to the stress on the right of women to work, a backlash to this strident feminism places an unnecessary burden on women to find work to the detriment of the family and their natural preferences. On the contrary Islam provides for these problems which have arisen recently in western societies. Muslim women have the freedom to leave home to work, or to remain at home; a choice that is frequently being faced by the nuclear

⁶³⁹Sivaramayya,129.

⁶⁴⁰The Maharani Of Baroda & S.M. Mitra.,The Position of Women in Indian Life (London: Longman, 1912).

family in the present. Therefore it was not incorrect to state then, as it would also be true now, that: "women of every station were better off under Islamic protection"⁶⁴² when compared to those in Europe or elsewhere, if they only knew their Islamic rights. There can be no denying that the custom of veiling has proved regressive of women's rights, and, as Mernissi says, that the veil is "a symbol revealing a collective fantasy of the Muslim community". By means of a mask, women were made to disappear and this highlights their illegal position on male territory. This led to violent reactions defended by nationalists and institutionalised for women in anti-colonial struggles. Muhammad V publicly unveiled his daughter in Tangiers in 1947. Ataturk did the same in Turkey, as did Reza Shah in Iran and Amanullah with the Afghans. However, it would be best to conclude with Mernissi, who quoted Kacem Amin's statement to show that women's seclusion and exclusion from social affairs were not a result of Islam, but were due to secular customs.⁶⁴³ Because they were imposed by force these well meaning moves were retrograde in their effect, not only on women, but on Muslim society as a whole. As every action has an equal and opposite reaction, there has been a swing of the pendulum back and away from where it was started in these countries. It is pathetic to hear of women being forced to unveil, as has once again been enforced in Turkey under the name of secularism and democracy. It is equally reprehensible to interfere with a woman's right to decide for herself, and force her to veil in the

⁶⁴¹ Siddiqi, 66.

⁶⁴² Lucy M.J. Garnett, The Women of Turkey and their Folklore (London: Watt, 1893) 46.

⁶⁴³ Mernissi, 189.

name of Islam. The human spirit is too supreme to be forced to do anything against its will. It must be respected as such and allowed to act voluntarily.

The conclusion reached by the preceding study in this chapter was that there were innumerable European misconceptions regarding the status of women under Islam, dating back to the eighteenth century. The reasons behind the origin of these stereotypes were at time derogatory, as when their culture or religion was being criticised. Sometimes these stereotypes also emerged out of laudable efforts at promoting the cause of Muslim women. Unfortunately, these imagined misconceptions acquired a life of their own and became embedded in the minds of both the participants and observers. Apart from the fact that there are clear-cut directives regarding the rights of women in Islam, these were overlooked and the ambiguous *ayahs* of the Qur'an, interpreted in the light of cultural norms, were favoured. Thus emerged a situation detrimental to the rights of women, which consequently led to the reinforcement of a distorted image of Islam. This situation makes it imperative to rectify the misconceptions, as only then will Muslim society, and the consequent misrepresentations of it be able to reach a balance regarding the rights of women.

CHAPTER IX - AFTERWORD

As a result of the search conducted for this thesis, a few generalisations can be made. Considering the background of inherent general ambiguity that had developed and prevailed towards Muslims in the realm of English literature of the nineteenth century, the importance of the subject cannot be overstated. The other overall conclusion that has been reached is that Victorian writers had fewer problems in understanding Islamic issues than might have been expected, but that they were frequently dismayed by manifestations of Muslim proclivities. Their ideas about the issues involved in some of these misconceptions were based on hearsay while some prevailing notions were based on evidence provided.

More intangible beliefs, such as the claim that the Qur'an is a Divine revelation, had also resulted in intense controversial scrutiny in English literature. The various criticisms discovered were levelled at the nature of its revelation and at selected *ayahs* taken in isolation and out of context, thus arousing apparent controversy. Apart from these objections and, after delving amongst its ethical tenets, there was little that writers of Victorian English literature found unpalatable, or surprising in the Qur'an. However earlier criticisms of the Qur'an, which continued to be expressed in Victorian works, have been quite resilient and have continued to survive until the present day. These persistent apprehensions also contribute to the conclusion that there were comparatively less misconceptions about the Qur'an than there were about misapplications of its precepts. Another factor responsible for this reasoning may have been the

avoidance of western works on Islamic theology in this thesis, and a concentration on the mainstream English literature which was more accessible to the general populace.

It has also become clear during this study that there was comparatively more critical material about the personality of the Prophet and that this owed more to attempts at the refutation of the Divine origin of the Qur'an and less to the character of the Prophet himself. There was a general unanimity about the doubts concerning Muhammad's claim of Prophethood and about a few apparently controversial historical incidents. More confusion was aroused by the veneration of Muhammad by consequent generations of Muslims. Whether this change was real or perceived was immaterial, what it produced was a total distortion of the Prophet's status.

The chapter on the varied practices of the Muslims produced more extensive material than the researches for the other chapters. This was because, even though the disparate Muslims greatly differed in the peripheral practise of their religion, they were mistakenly perceived as a unified entity by outsiders. The ability of Islam to unify a diversity of peoples created anxiety in the minds of those who observed it as a whole from the outside. To them it appeared as a monolithic behemoth which would engulf the whole of humanity. In order to contain this perceived threat extensive efforts at distortion of the truth were undertaken, which time and history proved to be insubstantial.

Finally the chapter on women has provided a plethora of misconceptions regarding Muslim women, most of which were provided both by the imagination

of the writers and by the evidence of Muslim malpractices. The major difference between the ideas about women and about other subjects is that the former were of comparatively recent origin and were a result of interaction with triumphant western cultures and with declining Muslim power.

Having examined each of the discussed aspects against their background of origin, it is deduced that most of the concepts were misconceived either deliberately or out of ignorance. Whichever was the case the misconceptions were still not serious enough to have inculcated the inherent hostility towards the religion. In comparison to the drastic allegations other religions of the monotheistic faith faced during their development, Islam has comparatively faced less grave charges. Alternately, while the other faiths have mostly overcome allegations against them, the misconceptions against Islam and the Muslims continue unabated. English literature has contributed considerably in the preservation of this mythic image of Islam and the Muslim, which has consequently been transferred to the mass media and continues to thrive upto the present day.

If the attribution of these distortions were anodyne it would be easy to ignore them. However the deleterious ramifications of these distortions cannot be ignored. Thereby a need arises for access to the Islamic aspect, which became even more pertinent while this study of Islam and the Muslims was commencing. The need has heightened now because the perceptibly rebellious conduct of the previously colonised Muslims and the prevailing misconceptions of Islam have consolidated the inimical image of the religion. This image has sadly consolidated

itself not only in the minds of the west, but also in those of Muslim posterity. This is because, presently, both sides generally obtain their information about Islam and Muslim behaviour from distorted sources and have unquestioningly assimilated these erroneous ideas. Some of these accounts are indigenous while other, nonindigenous ones, have become classics. These supersede any later works taking up a reasonable stance which the western as well as the indigenous mind at times regard as aberration. Therefore the problem of overcoming the misconceptions about Islam has become two-fold, as now, along with outside observers, the Muslims themselves are not too certain of their religious stipulations. This lacuna can be rectified by detailed theological delving into works and concepts that form the fundamentals of Islam and or disparate Muslim nationalities. A fresh appraisal of this inherent problem of misunderstanding would be beneficial and timely for all concerned.

A brief foray into a study of the portrayal of the Jew in the Victorian novel will put the conclusions reached by this thesis in context. According to Anne A. Naman in her book The Jew in the Victorian Novel, the discussed character provides another literary stereotype, who, like the Muslim, has been a victim of “prejudice”. Whether this prejudice was negative or positive, it entered the novel in two ways. One point of entry was through the reflection of social prejudice, while the other entry was through the use of artistic techniques which were similar to those of prejudice. The first method may be considered as the use of its content, while the second may be described as the use of its dynamics. Like that of the Muslim, the history of the image of the Jew is one of development and evolution

and not of drastic change from one period to another. The attitude of the medieval church towards the Jew formulated the archetypal images of the money-lender, murderer, and devil converged into a pariah, a separate being from others.⁶⁴⁴ These images led to the massacres by the Crusaders of Jewish populations living in Christian countries, even though it is said to have been the work of mobs who surrounded the armies. Over the centuries specific Church legislation made the pariah image into a concrete reality. In 1215 a decree was issued under Pope Innocent III which required both Jews and Muslims to wear some form of identifying badge. This decree led to social ostracization and ghettoisation of the Jew which was resorted to for the first time in Venice in 1516 and was gradually adopted by the rest of Europe. In medieval Spain the situation was different because the Jews had achieved important social, economic and cultural positions in the earlier Golden Age under Muslim rule and now reaped the benefits of their importance. Consequently, when anti-Semitism increased in the fourteenth century, the Jews did not become more closely knit, rather they converged towards the convenience of baptism. This segment of the Spanish population, known as Marranos, interfered with the ambition of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella to create a unified Catholic Spain. The pursuit of their religious ambition led to the establishment of the Papal bull which instituted the Castilian Inquisition in 1478, a body which was not formally abolished until 1834. Even the Inquisition was not adequate so an Edict of Expulsion of the Jews from Spain was signed by Ferdinand

⁶⁴⁴ Anne A. Naman, The Jew in the Victorian Novel (New York:AMS Press,1980) 31.

and Isabella in 1492.⁶⁴⁵ Though England had preceded every one in Europe in expelling the Jews and was the last to give them political rights, yet there were no violent expressions of anti-Semitism in England like those found in the rest of Europe. In nineteenth century England religious practise was no longer a means of division so that eventually religion was replaced by race in the attempt at differentiation. At this time the image of the Jew also underwent a change and he became increasingly integrated into the society. In the Victorian Age, though there were more liberal attitudes in social values and political legislation, yet the images of the Jew reflected prejudicial thinking both in the adherence to traditional myths and in development of new stereotypes. Disraeli and the Rothschild family, who must have influenced Victorian conceptions, were themselves perceived through distorted images. Though Disraeli entered politics because he had ceased to be a Jew and always spoke as a Christian, yet in racial terms it was a Jew and not an Anglo-Saxon who eventually became Prime Minister.⁶⁴⁶ Therefore, even though the depiction of Dickens' Fagin in the novel represented much more, it did not prevent those overly sensitive to anti-Semitism or Semites themselves from viewing Fagin as a negative stereotype, reinforcing prejudice amongst the Victorians.⁶⁴⁷ It was easy to ignore the fact that Fagin's prejudicial traits are closely tied to Dickens' artistic imagination and moral vision. According to Naman, "In all cases a novel's requirements motivated the use of prejudice so that prejudice serves, and exists within, an artistic structure". Prejudice is more

⁶⁴⁵Naman, 33-36.

⁶⁴⁶Naman, 42, 41, 48, 49.

⁶⁴⁷Naman, 72.

successful as a characterisation or plotting technique than as an artistic theme. Most often the artistic devices result in prejudice towards the group in question, rather than complex understanding. Although there is some evidence to the contrary, it is observed that a realistic mode of art cannot achieve a non-prejudicial portrayal. This is particularly so when prejudice against a specific race is an explicit concern of the novel. Prejudice and a realistic mode of art operate in different spheres.⁶⁴⁸ This criterion can be easily applied to an analysis of any group portrayed in Victorian novels, be it a social, racial or literary group. These mechanisms could also be used to criticise dominant elements of society as well as its outcasts.⁶⁴⁹ It would be more disturbing to study a minority group, such as the Jews, than to study dominant groups like English gentlemen or heroines. One becomes uncomfortably aware of any tendency to treat the Jewish character unjustly, because it seems that, in moral terms, literature has treated the Jew no better than society has. It is also disturbing because one expects adherence to justice and truth from literature of the highest artistic merit. Naman ends on an optimistic note and says that even though there is a difference between art and morality, a compatibility between the two can be expected. Literature can simultaneously entertain as well as penetrate life's experiences so that they can be better understood and in order to expand knowledge of human nature and situation. Literature must be humane and expansive, not prejudiced and restrictive.

⁶⁴⁸Naman, 204, 205.

⁶⁴⁹Naman, 8.

However, even if the experience of prejudice cannot be removed from the experience of reading a Victorian novel, it need not destroy that experience.⁶⁵⁰

This qualification can be applied to many of the works included in this thesis and to others which are not. The concern of this thesis is not with the individual or artistic devices of the authors concerned but rather with the effects of their endeavours. If the fallout of these works were not so negative, widespread or endemic, then there would be little need for a plea of understanding of the negative Muslim stereotype. The sweeping generalisations about Islam in English works of literature and in other forms of art which percolated into the Victorian period necessitate a closer view of this depiction of the Muslim.

Two books concerning this depiction or 'Orientalism' have recently been published, that one by John Mackenzie focuses on the arts while the other by Mohammed Sharafuddin concentrates on Romantic literature. When the two works are amalgamated they cover some similar ground to that specified in this thesis, with the difference that they have focused on Edward Said's Orientalism and on those who subscribe to his view of Orientalists in general. Another book concerning the same material was written earlier by John Sweetman who remarked that Said has a debatable thesis on the subject of the visual arts but does not go on to discuss it.⁶⁵¹

According to Mackenzie, Said's book is polemical and consequently Mackenzie's book will be the same. He believes that this is the only way to grapple with Said. Mackenzie works towards a similar goal to Said, but wants to achieve

⁶⁵⁰Naman, 206, 207.

it through understanding appropriate historical and cultural contextualisation. Mackenzie argues that when techniques of cultural cross-referencing are used, twentieth century insults often become nineteenth century compliments and sympathies.⁶⁵² According to Mackenzie historians are clear and readable while theorists are abstract, retreating into a corner.⁶⁵³ Mackenzie agrees that sympathies can only be built upon the exposure of areas of alleged misunderstandings of the past. But, according to him, the identification of negative stereotyping, slights and insults on the basis of late twentieth century perceptions has the opposite effect. It poisons the deep wells of sympathy and respect which artists of all sorts felt for the east in distinctly nineteenth century ways, not necessarily amenable to the critical values of the twentieth century. In Orientalism, more than in other fields, a particular selection of paintings, or quotations, can be used to prove anything.⁶⁵⁴ Modern critics damage the intercultural relations which should seek sympathy for the future, because of a monolithic binary vision of the past. Orientalism was endlessly protean, if this was adopted to further the western arts it does not invalidate the synthetic creative act which followed or the products which survive. Inevitably some dross was produced but many masterpieces remain. Mackenzie sums up with the premise that Said and his followers could only agree with the statement that no true art can ever be founded upon a perpetual parade of cultural superiority, or an outpouring of imperialist bile.⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁵¹Sweetman, introduction 8.

⁶⁵²Mackenzie, introduction. xxi.

⁶⁵³Mackenzie, 39.

⁶⁵⁴Mackenzie, introduction xviii.

⁶⁵⁵Mackenzie, 215, 213.

By the end of reading Mackenzie's book, with his unique approach towards Orientalism, one cannot help but be struck by the similarities of his conclusions with those of Said and his followers. Then Mackenzie broadens his criticism and says that the work of Said and Rana Kabbani is riddled with misconceptions and only serves to further the misunderstanding they seek to allay.⁶⁵⁶ For Mackenzie Orientalism, in art and music, tends to be given a privileged alterity: it is viewed as the single other against which Europe was constantly setting itself, while in reality internal as well as external others were sought out, such as the Scottish, Spanish, Russian, cultures and others.⁶⁵⁷ Mackenzie also criticises Rana Kabbani's interpretation of Orientalism and claims that she misses the complexities and dualities of western representations of the east, as well as adaptations of eastern forms, while taking instead disturbingly ahistorical forms. According to Mackenzie when "Occidental susceptibilities are applied to nineteenth century art it is at worst reduced to grotesquerie".⁶⁵⁸

It would be pertinent to refer to Kabbani's book Europe's Myths Of Orient (1986) which is based on her doctoral thesis submitted at Cambridge University. She conducts a detailed study of travel literature beginning with Arab travel writers, the colonists of the times and ends with nineteenth century colonists, of which the British were the main examples. In her introductory chapter she traces a common characteristic amongst all of the writers, which was the indulgence in exaggeration while describing alien cultures and the conscious promotion of the

⁶⁵⁶Mackenzie, introduction xviii.

⁶⁵⁷Mackenzie, 147.

⁶⁵⁸Mackenzie, introduction xvii.

colonising power. One disturbing factor in this study may be her pellucid depiction of these traits which does not leave room for other readings. In doing so she projects the feelings of countless readers of the cultures that have for centuries been alienated. She continues to pile evidence to prove her case through detailed analysis up to modern times with a chapter devoted to orientalist artists of today. The fact that this may be wearisome can only accentuate the frustration of the communities which have had these readings imputed to them for centuries. It would be more conducive to understanding if the dominant cultures adopted a more amenable attitude, in order that the debate may progress. Impatience will terminate the efforts of suppressed societies, which are only beginning to put forward a different point of view. The fact that the opinions they project are personal, communal, as well as subscribed to by respected academics from all disciplines, even in the dominant cultures, demands a more accommodative attitude rather than dismissal on the basis of personal irritation.

The prolific material studied in this thesis also contributes to the view that, in spite of access to greater information about the discussed communities, a persistent misunderstanding continues which needs to be discussed further.

Mohammed Sharafuddin's Islam And Romantic Orientalism of 1994 is an attempt to put forward an opposing approach to Said's which he calls realistic "Orientalism." He expounds the idea that historical development must be historically realistic and states that what Said wants cannot be achieved in one leap from darkness to light and from prejudice to truth. Orientalism can, however incompletely encourage and foster a discovery of the orient. Sharafuddin focuses

his study on Landor, Southey, Moore and Byron and considers the stimulus for their interest in the orient to be a form of rebellion against their own societies. He commends their sympathetic portrayal of Islam and states that Byron relied on many popular Islamic sources and western commentaries. Sharafuddin overlooks the 14 centuries that have elapsed since Islam was introduced to the world, and, however incompletely Orientalism may have encouraged the discovery of the orient, even eight hundred years is a considerable length of time to have enabled a better understanding than that which has been displayed.

After reading these books one can only conclude that, in spite of their purported denunciation of Said, they all in some way or the other express an opinion similar to his. No matter how these writers attempt to explain away Said's allegations they tend to prove exactly what he propounded. It would be very reassuring to share the optimism of these writers, but the conclusion of most writers as articulated by another writer, Brian Cheyette, prevents one from doing so. Cheyette's discourse on the duality of the Jew concerns either the ideal of literary "realism" or "nationalist particularism"; or modernist "post-liberalism".⁶⁵⁹ His observations of the Muslim categorise this as the stereotype which the Jew represented before the Second World War and which can easily slip from "English literary texts into the horrors of European history". Ironically he amends this categorisation with the condition that we cannot be complacent or detached in this study because, for him, the Muslim and Islam are unambivalently evil. It is unfortunate that the stance adopted by Cheyette and similar writers does not

elevate the level of discussion and provide a means of understanding prevailing apprehensions. Conversely there are other commentators who after researching their taught ambivalent attitudes towards Islam, conclude that Islam is not the threat its stereotype portrays. This acceptance underlines the premise in the first chapter that theological bias was most responsible for the misrepresentation of Islam and the Muslims. The evolution of the other two Abrahamic faiths which have both undergone periods of similar theological ambivalence and successfully overcome worse charges of misrepresentation, leads to similar optimism regarding Islam and the Muslim.

As misunderstanding is usually generated by distance and ignorance of the problem, this can be overcome by acquiring knowledge and familiarity with it. Since a vacuum concerning realistic portrayals of Islam has existed for so long, attempts to point out the injustices to an appropriated community are just beginning. It is too early to protest, for those sensitive to criticism of Orientalism, as it is for those critical of feminism. The voice of the other side is just beginning to be heard. If that tentative effort can arouse such strong emotions, then the feelings of a community which has been marginalised for centuries and continues to be so can only be conjectured. In any case, continuing to struggle in this quagmire of misunderstandings is detrimental to academic discourse. Meaningful dialogue becomes more important in considering those countries that were part of empire, and the effect that the salutary and even flawed policies of the colonial powers had on the population. It was immaterial what the intentions were, because when the

⁶⁵⁹Bryan Cheyette, introduction Constructions of "The Jew" in English literature and society :

affected populations took on board the negative opinions of their colonists, they also acquired the beneficial ones which had a positive effect. As the gap between the colonised period and independence has increased, the focus has been mainly on the negative effects, something which has resulted in the entrenchment of these societies and the expression of defiance in living up to the deleterious images. It would be advantageous to acknowledge this factor as dialogue must continue in full cognisance of the effects produced. The ends aimed at are not unattainable, as proponents of Islam and the Muslim sensibilities like Malek Bennabi, who personally suffered at the hands of the French colonists, have also subscribed to it. Writing in 1949, Bennabi commented that European society had pulled the Muslim world out of the chaos of occult forces with which it had replaced its spirit and upon which it was foundering. Bennabi wrote this after describing an experience in which he had wept at seeing the Prophet's name used derisively over a stall in the 1931 Colonial exhibition in Paris. He compared the Muslim world to a shadow deformed by the imagination of the visionaries who had lost, along with their sense of the real, the very genius of the soil. He was also critical of Muslim society and of what he called the *post-Muwahhid* man, who was the incarnation of colonisability. This was his term for a person whom the coloniser makes perform the role of the indigene whether in the guise of a pasha, a false alim, a false intellectual or beggar. According to Bennabi, the Muslim world had frozen in 1349 in which state it still seems to be.⁶⁶⁰

racial representations, 1875-1945. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) 12.

⁶⁶⁰ Malik Bennabi, Islam in History and Society (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1988) 20, 14, 12.

Despite the trend of the majority over the years, there have been, as observed, efforts by writers in the west to overcome the barriers of misunderstanding between the two cultures. The efforts of controversial writers must also be acknowledged for they have kept the issue in the forefront. A different perspective is always welcome, but criticism is more constructive when it is based on fact. It is equally obvious that concern for future welfare only occurs when affections are engaged between two entities. The burgeoning Muslim civilisation's translating and expanding on Greek and other classics contributed towards the preservation of the western world's civilisation. Similarly the efforts of the Orientalists towards the preservation and translations of Muslim culture, art and literature is to be appreciated, for they perpetuated an inheritance which its custodians allowed to disintegrate. If it were not for each other the two would not be. In the spirit of accommodation, it is to be hoped that the Muslim world and western academia will not allow personal irritations to interfere with their judgement and will instead appreciate the constructive intent underlying the criticism of each other's works. To do so will always be beneficial to dialogue and the state of misunderstanding and consequent misrepresentations in English literature and other mediums will not remain in the present unsatisfactory situation, a situation which has existed for centuries.

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TABLE OF THEATRICAL PERFORMANCES

<u>NAME</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>PLACE</u>
<i>Cara Mustapha</i>	1686	
<i>Zaire</i>	1732	Paris
<i>Banditi</i>	1781	
<i>Gulnaré</i>	1798	
<i>Zaira</i>	1803	
<i>Gulistan</i>	1805	
<i>Zaira</i>	1805	
<i>Circassian Bride</i>	1809	
<i>Bayaderes</i>	1810	
<i>Abu Hassa</i>	1811	
<i>Faruk</i>	1812	
<i>L,Italiana In Algeria</i>	1819	Haymarket
<i>Il Turco In Italia</i>	1821	King's Theatre
<i>Aladdin</i>	1826	
<i>Oberon</i>	1826	Covent Garden
<i>Arabi nelle Gallie</i>	1827	
<i>Abdul und Erinieh</i>	1828	
<i>Le Dieu Et La Bayadere</i>	1830	Paris
<i>Ali Baba</i>	1833	
<i>La Revolte Au Serail</i>	1833	Paris
<i>The Arab Of The Desert</i>	1837	Sadlers Wells
<i>Zohrab The Hostage</i>	1837	Covent Garden

<i>The Cataract Of The Ganges</i>	1837	Covent Garden
<i>Timur The Tartar</i>	1837	Sadlers Wells
<i>The Indian Girl</i>	1837	Drury Lane
<i>El Hyder</i>	1837	Sadlers Wells
<i>Babu</i>	1838	
<i>Arajoon</i>	1838	Adelphi
<i>Leil, Maid Of The Alhambra</i>	1838	Sadlers Wells
<i>Englishmen In India</i>	1839	Drury Lane
<i>Le Diable Amoureux</i>	1840	Musique Paris
<i>Anato, King Of Assyria</i>	1840	City Of London
<i>The Pacha Of Egypt</i>	1840	Sadlers Wells
<i>Die Entfuhrung Aus Dem</i>	1841	Drury Lane
<i>Serail</i>		
<i>Semiramide</i>	1842	Covent Garden
<i>Abd El Kader</i>	1842	Sadlers Wells
<i>Conqueror's Steed;</i>	1842	Sadlers Wells
<i>Karabagh</i>		
<i>Lalla Rookh</i>	1842	Sadlers Wells
<i>La Peri</i>	1843	Paris
<i>Love And Vengeance</i>	1843	Sadlers Wells
<i>The Son Of The Desert</i>	1843	Sadlers Wells
<i>Ali Hitsch Hatsch</i>	1844	
<i>Aladdin</i>	1844	Lyceum
<i>Alzira</i>	1845	
<i>Crusaders</i>	1846	
<i>Nabucco</i>	1846	Her Majesty,s Theatre
<i>Lalla Rookh Or The Rose Of</i>	1846	Her Majesty's Theatre
<i>Lahore</i>		

<i>The Desert: Or The Imann,s</i>	1847	Drury Lane
<i>Daughter</i>		
<i>Thea Ou La Feé Aux Fleurs</i>	1847	Her Majesty's Theatre.London
<i>La Fille De Marbre</i>	1847	Musique, Paris
<i>Corsaro</i>	1848	
<i>Leila</i>	1848	
<i>Abd El Kader</i>	1848	Victoria
<i>Caid</i>	1849	
<i>Conquista de Granada</i>	1850	
<i>Moses In Egypt</i>	1850	Covent Garden
<i>The Apostate</i>	1852	Marylebone
<i>World's War</i>	1854	Victoria
<i>Le Corsaire</i>	1856	Paris
<i>The Arab Of The Desert</i>	1856	Astley's
<i>India In 1857</i>	1857	Surrey
<i>Sacountla</i>	1858	Opera Paris
<i>The Corsair</i>	1859	Victoria
<i>Le Papillon</i>	1860	Paris
<i>Circassiene</i>	1861	
<i>Lalla-Roukh</i>	1862	
<i>Nana Sahib</i>	1863	Victoria
<i>The Hump-Backed Horse</i>	1864	St. Petersburg
<i>Abu hassan</i>	1865	Covent Garden
<i>Cid</i>	1865	
<i>Zaidé</i>	1866	Salzburg
<i>La Source</i>	1866	Paris
<i>Leila</i>	1868	
<i>The Abyssinian War</i>	1868	Brittania

<i>Pindee Singh</i>	1868	Royal Alfred
<i>Abon Hassan</i>	1869	Royal Charing Cross Theatre
<i>Zana</i>	1870	Brittania
<i>Āida</i>	1876	Covent Garden
<i>Zelma</i>	1876	Brittania
<i>La Bayadere</i>	1877	St. Petersburg
<i>The Circassian</i>	1877	Criterion
<i>Yedda</i>	1879	Paris
<i>Zoraiya, Or The Moorish</i>	1881	Maryinsky Theatre St.Petersburg
<i>Woman In Spain</i>		
<i>Namouna</i>	1882	Theatre de l'Opera, Paris
<i>Sakuntla</i>	1884	Paris Opera
<i>Lakmé</i>	1885	London Gaiety Theatre
<i>Mikado</i>	1885	
<i>The Mikado</i>	1885	Savoy Theatre
<i>The Talisman</i>	1889	St. Petersburg
<i>La Garconniere</i>	1889	Prince of Wales
<i>The Begum's Diamonds</i>	1889	Avenue
<i>Barbier von Baghdad</i>	1891	Savoy Theatre
<i>The Nautch Girl</i>	1891	Savoy Theatre
<i>The Naulakha</i>	1891	Opera Comique
<i>Boabdil</i>	1892	
<i>Mirza</i>	1893	Opera Comique
<i>Tarass Bulba</i>	1895	
<i>Geisha</i>	1896	
<i>The Geisha</i>	1896	Daly's Theatre
<i>The Yashmak</i>	1897	Shaftesbury Theatre
<i>A Greek Slave</i>	1898	Daly's Theatre

<i>A Chinese Honeymoon</i>	1899	Theatre Royal, Hanley
<i>San Toy</i>	1899	Daly's Theatre
<i>The Rose Of Persia</i>	1899	London
<i>Carnac Sahib</i>	1899	Her Majesty's Theatre
<i>The Sons Of The Empire</i>	1899	Brittania
<i>The Blood-Red Flower</i>	1907	St. Petersburg
<i>Cleopatra</i>	1909	Paris
<i>Schehrazade</i>	1910	Paris
<i>Petrouchka</i>	1911	Paris
<i>The Sleeping Princess</i>	1921	London
<i>Cydalise Et Le Chevre-Pied</i>	1923	Paris

